

HEAVENLY PLACES.

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HEAVENLY PLACES.



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ADDRESSES

ON

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

BY

STEVENSON A. BLACKWOOD,

AUTHOR OF "TRIUMPH OF FAITH," ETC.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION,

BY

REV. WILLIAM E. BOARDMAN, D. D.

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INTRODUCTION.

WAS it not a cruel thing that Caleb and Joshua were compelled to go back from Kadesh Barnea, the very line of the land flowing with milk and honey, and live with their people forty years in the wilderness, wherein was not even bread and water? They must do it. They were all ready to go on into the land and enjoy its corn, and wine and oil, its hills and valleys, showers and springs, and to rejoice in them. Yet they had to return into the wilderness where no corn could grow from the soil, but where bread must be given them from heaven on the face of the sand and the rocks; nor any wells did spring up in ever living streams, except as brought forth by the rod of God. Forty years long they were compelled to wander there, after having seen the green hills and vine-clad slopes, and olive yards, and springs, and streams, and flocks, and herds, with their own eyes, and after having taken into their hearts the assurance of God's promise that those very hills and valleys, houses and lands, with all their wealth, belonged to them as God's gift, and should at once be put into their hands. A cruel thing it was. How came it? Who was to blame? Not they, for they were all ready. Not God, for He had given all by

promise, and stood ready to make His promise good by putting them into actual possession. Ah ! they could not leave their people,—the people of God,—their own dear people. They must dwell among them, and the people would not go in, nay, could not enter the land, because of unbelief. They looked at the giants and the walls in contrast with themselves, and were appalled. They did not look at them in contrast with God, or they would have gone on and gone in, and conquered and taken possession, singing all the way along. Therefore it was that the people turned back, and thus compelled Caleb and Joshua to serve with them and live with them, eat wilderness fare and share wilderness life with them in all its humblings, hungerings and wanderings. Murmurings they did not, could not, share with the people. They did not even murmur against the people, much less against God. Yet they, in fellowship with the *long* suffering,—yes, the *suffering*, the suffering *long* of God,—they suffered the manners of the people in the wilderness while sharing with them wilderness fare.

A cruel thing it is to-day that some in all the churches of our Lord, who have looked into the perfect law of liberty and are continuing therein, and who know how Eschol looks and tastes, are yet compelled to live in the wilderness upon wilderness fare from pulpit and prayer meeting and in daily conversation. They accept it and thank God for it, as the best they can get. They do not murmur or complain. They bear with meekness and gentleness the wretched complainings of those around them, even when they are made worse by being put in the doleful songs of their backsliding :—

“Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord,
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?”

But O! is it not infinitely worse that Jesus, who says unto us, “Lo, I am with you always” and our Father, who makes His abode with us, and our Comforter who dwells in us, should be compelled to serve with His people in their sins? Was it not infinitely worse that the loving God should be grieved forty years long in the wilderness with His people, who turned back from the land through distrust of God’s ability and willingness to fulfill His promise?

Is it not sad and awful to think how year after year the Spirit is grieved, the Son is dishonored, the Father distrusted?

But now there are Calebs and Joshuas all over the world, whose hearts are overjoyed with the voice of the Lord ringing through the churches, “Arise! go over this Jordan,” and with the response from so many, “Let us arise and go over, and possess the land.” Yes, there are Calebs and Joshuas who can take up the song of the Psalmist and sing it in the present tense:—

“Now that the Lord is turning the captivity of Zion,
We are like them that dream,
Our mouth is filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Now we can say among the heathen
The Lord hath done great things for us,
Yea, the Lord hath done great things for us,
Whereof we are glad.”

And in this these rejoicing ones do but enter into the joy of the Lord. They have had fellowship with His sufferings ; now they have fellowship with His delights. O ! the joy of the Lord over every one who enters into the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel and there abides and grows !

One of the blessed things accompanying this great and growing work of God among His people, is the unfolding of the hitherto hidden treasures of His Word. In the wilderness life, all the bread eaten during the whole forty years was just that which they found on the surface from day to day. There was no soil to plough, there were no mines to work, nothing but arid sand and solid rock. Springs among the hills wherfrom to drink and give to the cattle, and to guide in irrigating streams over the lands ? Absurd ! There were none. Pools as treasure places for the rains of heaven, to be used in time of drought ? Foolish thought ! There were no grassy hills and vales for pools, nor any arable lands to be irrigated. The whole life was fitful, in tents ; the whole living was surface-fare. Plenty of room for murmuring, all the more because just over there was the land flowing with milk and honey, covered with corn and vines, studded with cities of stone ; a place of abiding, a place of rest, a place of abundance. Only, alas ! it was not theirs. They had rejected it, and they had chosen the wilderness with its tent life and surface living.

But in life in the land, O how different ! The surface soil is rich, and all the land well watered, fresh and green. Deeper down the sub-soil plough brings a richer harvest. Artesian wells touch the abundant fountains springing up

and flowing forth in rivers of living water. Deeper, yet deeper, and up come gold, and diamonds, and every precious stone.

The New Testament becomes a new book, glowing with a new glory through all its promises. The Old Testament, like the deep down strata of the rocks, shows forth the types of living things with a beauty and a force charming to the heart.

As this work goes on, the area possible to the Colensoes for footing amongst those who respect the Bible is every day growing narrower, and will narrower grow until the Colensoes themselves will have no standing place upon it left for themselves.

Such books as this, and others by the same dearly beloved author, are each but single artesian borings down to the exhaustless fountains stored up among the everlasting hills of the Pentateuch and other ancient Scriptures. Other rivers have flowed forth, and others yet will flow forth, enriching the paradise now regaining, the heavenly places in Christ Jesus into which we are coming, yea, come, now and here upon earth.

Would any one like to know how to arise and go over this Jordan?

Accept it as true that a life of habitual victory over sin and union with Christ, is your present and perpetual privilege. Weigh every difficulty that presents itself in the scale over against the power of God to overcome them—not over against your helplessness. Accept the fact that it is the power of God in you and with you, that is to overcome every thing against you within and without.

Commit the whole work to Him to do. Commit yourself just as you are, to the Lord Jesus Christ as your Joshua. Trust Him to lead you, and give yourself up to obey Him in every thing. Let Him direct you in every step. Let Him show you what to put off and what to put on. Let Him have His own way with you. Say, "Yes, yes, yes," to every thing He requires. Do it, too, —do the yes,—step forth at His word, without waiting to see the way open, or to feel any strength, or see any light. Step forth into the very waters, trusting the Lord to open them. Yes, and go on when they are opened, into their very midst. There, there only, will you find it possible to set up the grave-stones of your old wilderness life, and to take up the memorial stones of your new life in the land. Thus, and thus only, under the leadership of Jesus, our Joshua, will you be able to reckon yourself dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This done, let yourself alone in the hands of Jesus, and go on as He leads you to Gilgal with its circumcision and its passover, to Jericho with its shout and its victory, and through the valley of Achor, if need be, as a door of hope, and on, and on, from victory to victory, for so will He lead you.

And then never again take yourself up at all, but let Christ have you with all your weaknesses, and all your burdens, and all your cares, and take you Him once for all and every moment afterwards, forever, as your present portion and your exceeding great reward.

THE LAND OF PROMISE; OR, HEAVENLY PLACES.

EPHESIANS i. 3.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

THE Church, though "militant here on earth," is yet "seated in heavenly places." She is in a position of conflict and yet of rest, and the rest precedes and is an indispensable condition of successful conflict. The believer finds peace *with* God, before he begins to fight *for* God.

"When his pardon is signed, and his peace is procured,
From that moment his conflict begins."

That position of assured pardon and settled peace, is described by the expression "heavenly places," which is only used in the Epistle to the Ephesians; but is there used five times, to set before the people of God their calling, dignity, and responsibility.

It is said of Christ that "God raised Him from

the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the *heavenly places*,” (i. 20.)

It is said of those who are one with Christ, that “ God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in *heavenly places* in Christ Jesus,” (ii. 5, 6.)

There they have everything which it is possible for God to give them, for He who is “ the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in *heavenly places* in Christ,” (i. 3.)

There angels behold in the mystery of the Church the perfection of God’s counsel, for “ now unto the principalities and powers in *heavenly places* (is) known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God,” (iii. 10.)

But here, also, though the scene of all spiritual blessings, of assured forgiveness, of peace with God, is also the scene of determined, ceaseless warfare, “ for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in *heavenly places*,” (vi. 12.)

“ Heavenly places,” therefore, are not heaven. There there is no conflict, no wrestling, no spiritual wickedness. The Church that is “ militant here on earth,” is in “ heavenly places,” though not in heaven. The redeemed from among men, who constitute that Church, are united to Christ, quickened with Christ, seated with Christ, blessed in

Christ, exhibiting in Christ the wisdom of God, and fighting in Christ against His enemies. They are justified, but not glorified. Though in the sight of men they are on earth, in the sight of God they are in heavenly places; for they are in Christ, and where the Head is, there is the body.

“Heavenly places” then describe that actual condition, in which every child of God by virtue of a new birth, every member of the bride of Christ by virtue of union, every living soul by virtue of resurrection, is already placed. In the sight of God and of angels, in the positive experience of his own soul, he is in heavenly places, though his feet are yet on earth.

This apparent contradiction is illustrated by the tribes of Israel when in the wilderness. They occupied a twofold position; though it may seem strange to say so, they were in two places at once. As regarded their bodily position, they were in the wilderness—their feet trod the sand of the desert. As regarded their spiritual position, where were they? Look for a moment into the tabernacle, and see the high priest as he walks amidst the shadows of the heavenly things, amidst those “holy places,” which were “figures of the true.” How is he dressed? What are those flashing jewels that he wears on his heart? Twelve stones, each deeply graven “with the gravings of a signet,” and exhibiting the name of a tribe. They were deeply set in gold, securely fastened to

the robe of glory by “ chains of gold,” and “ laces of blue,” so that they “ should not be loosed from the ephod,” “ borne upon his heart continually for a memorial before Jehovah for ever.” There was Israel representatively ; indissolubly united to their high priest—in the ever-burning brightness of the light of the holy place,—in its stillness of peace, removed from the stir and bustle of the camp,—fenced in by the curtains of fine linen,—sustained upon the shoulder and the heart of Aaron,—there was every Israelite; though strangers and pilgrims in the wilderness, they were at home in God. He was their dwelling and their resting-place. Few of them might have understood the figure, but it none the less exhibited a glorious truth. For it was a beautiful and expressive type of the twofold position of the Christian. Practically he is on earth, a pilgrim, a soldier, weary, hungering, thirsting. Virtually he is in heavenly places, where Jesus his High Priest is, in the very presence of God. “ Your life is hid with Christ in God,” (Col. iii. 3.)

The twelve stones were indissoluble from the ephod, that garment which, being made of the same material as the veil, symbolised the flesh of Christ, (Heb. x. 20;) but which, being in addition interwoven with gold, showed His immortality in resurrection life, for it could not be rent. They could only be separated from the high priest’s person by his divesting himself of his garments “ for glory

and beauty.” That he had to do when it became his duty to make atonement every year with blood of bulls and goats. But Jesus, our High Priest, has made atonement once for all, and once for ever. He need not, cannot lay His glory by again. “Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more.” He wears for ever the garment for glory and beauty, and they who are joined to Him by the purpose and grace of God, can never be separated from Him. His life is their life. Nay, He is their life, and He says, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” The believer may echo the triumphant words of the apostle, and say, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,” (Romans viii. 38, 39.) Jesus must lay aside His glory before one of His ransomed ones can be taken from His heart.

“The world may pass and perish ; Thou, God, wilt not remove ;
No hatred of all devils can part me from Thy love ;
No hungering nor thirsting, no poverty nor care,
No wrath of mighty princes can reach my shelter there.
No angel, and no heaven, no throne, nor power, nor might,
No love, no tribulation, no danger, fear, nor might ;
No height, no depth, no creature that has been, or can be,
Can drive me from Thy bosom—can sever me from Thee.” *

The type falls short of the antitype in this

* Paul Gerhardt.

respect, that it was only in the holy place, not the most holy, that Aaron wore the breastplate. But the veil being rent, there is no division. Now, holy and most holy are one, and we have “boldness to enter *into the holiest* by the blood of Jesus.”

Here, then, is the twofold position of the child of God beautifully illustrated. Our feet are in the wilderness, but our names are on His heart, and our life is hid with Him.

It is quite true that many may not realise that hidden life in its brightness, its peace, and its plentiful provision within the veil ; but it is none the less a glorious, unalterable fact ; and their dimness of perception, or their changeable feelings, can no more destroy its truth, than they can prevent the sun from shining. It is true of every child of God, of the youngest and feeblest as of the oldest and most advanced Christian. It does not depend on age, or intelligence, or strength, but upon *union* with a living Saviour. Every believer in Him is “quickened with Him,” and “seated with Him in heavenly places.”

The possession of life is common to the babe, the young man, and the father ; the apprehension or enjoyment of life may, and does, vary in each. So with the children of God : one may but have just been born again—have realised forgiveness and salvation through the blood of the Lamb ; another may be feeling that he is not only forgiven and saved, but that he is also a pilgrim

travelling through the wilderness; while a third may have reached a further stage of experience, and though none the less forgiven, and none the less a pilgrim, be quietly enjoying the rest into which the Lord his God has brought him, understanding in his deepest consciousness what it is to be “seated in heavenly places.” Nay, it may be that one and the same soul may, in one little day, or one short hour, have experience of each phase of Christian life.

Now these three stages are strikingly exemplified in the history of the Israelites, and we there find them very distinctly marked off the one from the other. First, we see the period when they were *saved* from judgment by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door-posts; then we see them delivered from Egypt by the passage of the Red Sea, and taking up their position as pilgrims in the wilderness; lastly, we find them entering the land of rest through the river Jordan, and separated from the wilderness by its waters. And to this we have a precise counterpart in the experience of the believer in Jesus, who first realises that he has “redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins;” then, that he is by that death delivered from this present evil world, and thereby constituted “a stranger here;” then, that by the same Jesus, he is brought into heavenly places; into a land which, though there be conflict there, is yet as abounding with all spiritual blessings as the earthly Canaan

abounded with every earthly gift that God could bestow on His people.

It may be that sometimes the redeemed soul at once apprehends the marvellous position in which it is placed; but, as a general rule, it will, I think, be found that the successive stages in Israel's history prefigure the spiritual history of the children of God.

It is evidently this last, and most blessed stage of experience, that the Epistle to the Ephesians especially presents to us; for it is there only that the expression, "heavenly places," occurs. There, all those spiritual blessings in Christ are unfolded to the people of God by the apostle in quick succession, and the believer is shown how the love and power of God has made him who was "far off" "nigh by the blood of Christ," and caused those who were "dead in trespasses and sins," and by nature children of wrath, to be partakers of eternal life in Christ, and to be seated with Him in the very presence of His God and Father. Earnestly does the apostle pray in the first chapter that they to whom he is writing may have their understanding enlightened to apprehend these wondrous privileges, that they may know "what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ," (i. 18-20.) And again, in the

third chapter, that they “may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God,” (iii. 18, 19.)

For the apprehension of these spiritual blessings is necessary for a holy walk and conversation. I must know my position and privileges as one with Jesus if I am to walk worthy of the vocation with which I am called; and one great cause of the low standard of living amongst professing Christians may assuredly be found in the fact, that so many fail to see the glorious position and privileges of all who are truly united to Christ. To exhibit this, first to unfold the privileges, and then to enforce the responsibilities of the people of God, we may consider to be the leading thoughts of the Epistle in question. And it is with the view of enabling my readers in some measure to apprehend this that the following pages have been written.

The Book of Joshua contains, I believe, in shadow, what the Epistle to the Ephesians exhibits in substance. Exodus shows us the people of God saved by the blood of the Lamb, and coming out of the world to serve God. Leviticus unfolds to us the priestly character of the redeemed, and the nature of true service. Numbers describes their wanderings and their sins. Deuteronomy contains a revelation of the will of God concerning their conduct when they should be come into the rest

which He was about to give them. Joshua presents them to us as entering by faith into the land of blessing—taking possession of a great part, if not of all, that the Lord had promised them—enjoying the rest of Canaan, and yet fighting inch by inch against the mighty nations which inhabited it. That book, therefore—dwelling, as it does, upon the rest and privileges of Israel, and at the same time describing their dangers, conflicts, and failures—is the exact counterpart of the Epistle to the Ephesians; and its careful study cannot fail, under the gracious teaching of the Holy Spirit of God, to throw much light upon the glorious truths which are there written.

This subject, I have no doubt, must have been frequently handled by those who have been more fitted to deal profitably with it than I am. Having, however, been permitted, in two former works,* to convey, in the great goodness of God, some help to the hearts of others, I am encouraged now to send forth this further volume, which, like them, embodies the substance of addresses delivered some years ago, in the hope that He, whose glory I desire to promote, may be graciously pleased to bestow an additional and far greater blessing upon those who may read it. For any errors which it may contain, I alone am responsible; for the truths which, I trust, it conveys, let God be glorified.

* "Forgiveness, Life, and Glory," and "The Shadow and the Substance." Nisbet & Co.

The following pages do not expound the opening scenes of the Book of Joshua in the exact order in which they are there described. Some passages in the first chapter, referring to the personal energy of faith, by which the land could alone be possessed,* and the sure blessing which should follow a close study of and adherence to the law of Moses,† are, together with the deeply interesting history of Rahab, postponed to a later volume, which I trust to be able to prepare.

May God now be pleased richly to bless what has been written. The importance of the subject cannot be overrated. We have had the glorious gospel of the grace of God preached among us widely and freely; and of late years the trumpet has given a more certain sound than ever. “Times of refreshing” have been vouchsafed, and we have seen through the length and breadth of our land—we have heard from the far-off countries and from the isles of the sea, that “the preaching of the Cross is the power of God.” Multitudes have been led, through the preaching of a present, full, free gospel, to trust in Jesus for the remission of sins, and have realised that, according to the Word of God, they have “passed from death unto life,” and have been “translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” For this unspeakable blessing God be praised!

But have not many been practically content with

* Chap. i. 3.

† Chap. i. 7, 8.

having life, instead of having it "*more abundantly*,"—with mere entrance into the kingdom, instead of apprehending that "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," which are its characteristics? I do not mean that they profess to be content; they are frequently complaining that they make no progress, lamenting the weakness of their faith, the coldness of their love, the changeableness of their feelings; but they remain practically where they were. They are *professing* Christians; but they are not *possessing* the land. They are not "*serving the Lord their God with joyfulness*," and are consequently not attracting others to Christ. Not being, moreover, in the actual realisation and enjoyment of spiritual blessings, they are, so to speak, compelled to seek their joys in earthly things; their consciences are uneasy, for they feel that they are coming short of the rest which is held out and promised to faith, and their life is a continual contradiction. They are the king's children, and are "*yet lean from day to day*;" and thus they discredit their Father's name, and the provision of His house.

Now, I believe that this in great measure arises from the failure to apprehend their real position "*in heavenly places in Christ*;" they do not see their blessed portion in the good land, and they consequently seek their satisfaction elsewhere, and "*walk as men*." It has been well said that "*a Christian is not so much a man on earth looking*

up to heaven, as a man in heaven looking down on earth ;” and one great step towards the attainment of that high ideal, that heavenly life, is to know that in the purpose and sight of God I am where Christ is, “ far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,” (Eph. i. 21.) The deeper the consciousness of this blessed position is in my soul, the more truly shall I be able to say—

“ I stand upon the mount of God
With sunlight in my soul ;
I hear the storms in vales beneath,
I hear the thunders roll.
“ But I am calm with Thee, my God,
Beneath these glorious skies,
And to the height on which I stand
Nor storms nor clouds can rise.”

It is, therefore, of the deepest importance for Christian holiness—for heavenly-mindedness—for usefulness to others—and thus for the glory of God—that I should clearly see and understand the “hope of His calling and the exceeding greatness of His power.” I may, to be sure, be saved without such an apprehension of my high calling. Salvation is not the consequence of knowledge, but of trust in Jesus. But I cannot be holy, I cannot be fully happy, I cannot be hearty in the service of God without it. I shall be but a babe, instead of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, into a perfect man.

It is with the view of leading to a clearer understanding of the blessed truths to which I have referred, that these pages, then, are written. That God may use them for that purpose I earnestly pray, and I trust that every Christian reader will join me in that prayer.

THE DEATH OF MOSES; OR, THE END OF THE LAW.

JOSHUA i. 2.

“Moses my servant is dead: now *therefore* arise, go over this Jordan.”

It is difficult to imagine that the death of one who had been such a careful leader, such a wise law-giver, and, above all, such a patient, loving, and long-suffering friend, as well as ruler, could have been good news to the Israelites. Yet so it was. As long as Moses lived they were shut out from the promised land; until he died, although within a stone’s throw of its vineyards, and olive-yards, and corn-fields, they must yet remain on the wilderness side of Jordan. He might bring the people to its brink; he might see the goodly land in its length and breadth; but he was not to cross the river, or to bring the people over into the inheritance which God had promised them.

Much, then, as they had reason to love him—deeply as many of them must have loved him—long and sincere as was their mourning for him in the

plains of Moab—they must, nevertheless, have felt that his life hindered them from entering into possession of the land of blessing; and the actual announcement of his death, together with the commission to Joshua to arise and go over Jordan, must have called the people to exchange the spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise, and have told them that the last obstacle was removed—Moses was dead.

But why did he die? And, above all, why did he die just then and there? Why, after relinquishing the pleasures and riches of Egypt,—after forty years' training in the desert of Midian,—and after the subsequent forty weary years of the wilderness journey, its toils and troubles, its hopes and fears, was this wonderful man not permitted to reap the fruit of his self-denial, his training, and his loving, faithful service, by leading his beloved Israel into the goodly land—by planting his own foot on the soil promised to his forefathers, and after which his heart so yearned. We know how he longed for it, how the passionate desire of his aged but not enfeebled heart burst forth in the cry, “O Lord God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy mighty hand;—I pray Thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.” Why then might he only behold it with his eyes, and then, giving over his charge to another, breathe his last upon its very border?

Had he not served his Master well? Oh, yes. We remember how, when the jealousy of his brother and sister broke out against him, his Lord took up the cause of him who was too meek and lowly in his own eyes to plead it for himself, and said in sudden anger, “My servant Moses is not so, who is *faithful in all Mine house*. . . . Wherefore, then, were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?” So faithful was he, that it is mentioned no less than twenty-one times that he did “as the Lord commanded Moses.”

Why, then, must he die? Did his Lord not love him? Oh, yes; we cannot doubt that He loved him. Such visions of glory as no other mortal ever beheld were vouchsafed to him. Such close converse did his God hold with him, that it was said, that “the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” Such honour was paid him, that he alone, of all that ever died, was buried by none other than his Maker’s hand:

“The hand of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.”

Surely the Lord loved Moses. Did He not choose him, fifteen hundred years later, to be with Him in His brief glory on the Mount, there to speak with Him and Elijah of “His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem?” We cannot doubt that He loved him. Why, then, must he die just where and when he did?

He died for his sin at Meribah. (Num. xx.) Irritated beyond measure by the repeated murmurings of the Israelites, he suffered his anger to break out. "They provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips, and it went ill with Moses for their sakes." God had commanded him to speak to the rock, and that it should give forth water ; and instead of doing so, he spoke angrily and haughtily to the people, and smote the rock twice. God immediately rebuked His servant, and Aaron, who was associated with him in this step, and said, " Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

We might think that it was a severe punishment for an offence which was committed under great provocation, that for a momentary outburst of anger, a little loss of temper, and a hasty speech, this faithful servant, so honoured, so beloved, so meek, so self-denying, so truly noble, should lose the reward of his long years of patient service, and see the joy and honour of bringing his dearly-loved Israel into the promised land transferred to his own servant Joshua. It might seem so at first sight ; but God had higher objects in view in inflicting this punishment than appear on the surface. The reason of His mysterious dealings with Israel, and with all the men of Old Testament days, whose lives are recorded in the Word, is given us in the

New Testament. "These things happened unto them for ensamples," (lit. types): "and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." The men of old were typical characters, living parables, by which God has manifested in a most striking manner the truths that He desired to teach mankind.

What, then, is the special truth that lies concealed in this mysterious death of Moses? Moses was the representative of the LAW. "The law was given by Moses." When our Lord was transfigured, there appeared with Him the two men who could be most fitly said to be representatives of the dispensation which was then passing away, to leave behind the glory of the gospel of Christ—Moses and Elijah: "The law and the prophets" then gave place to Jesus. The death of this man, who, above all others, was perhaps a representative man,—his death at such a time and place, followed by the words, "Moses, my servant, is dead: arise, therefore, go over this Jordan," was meant to teach us some important lesson in regard to the law. What is that lesson? I gather a twofold one. First, that *one* breach of the law excludes from the promised land; secondly, that it is not by Moses, or the law, but by Joshua, or Jesus, that we can alone enter in. Let me ask the reader carefully to consider these truths, for they are all-important.

First, That *one* breach of the law excludes from the promised land. Moses was above all men

faithful to God. God Himself said of him, “He is faithful in all Mine house.” No one held more constant communion with God. No one obeyed Him more literally. No one walked with Him more closely. No one, if keeping the commandments could entitle to the blessing, could produce a clearer title than Moses. Yet once, we are told, he sinned—he lost his temper,—he “spake unadvisedly with his lips,”—a hasty word broke from him unguardedly, and he was shut out. What a striking commentary on the words, “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all!” *i.e.*, he is a “transgressor of the law.”

And this stands to reason; for it is thus that we should argue in regard to human law. The moment a man breaks the law of England, he forfeits his liberty, his position, his character, his rights; he becomes a criminal: he may have stolen one pound or a thousand, and his punishment will be proportioned to the magnitude of his crime, and the greater or less evil of its consequences to society; but he is a law-breaker, a criminal. He can no longer take his place with those whose lives, so far as the law of the land can take cognizance of them, are blameless.

And “shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?” (Job iv. 17.) If such are the natural laws which human wisdom has framed for the well-being of

society, shall God take less care for the well-being of all the glorious company of heaven? No; assuredly He will have fenced it round with jealous care. "There shall in no wise enter in anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie," (Rev. xxi. 27.) Do we ask the question, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in His holy place?" Forth from the secret chamber of the divine presence comes the answer, "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

If the law be the way of life, that law must be kept to its smallest jot and tittle; no shortcomings can be passed over: the smallest breach invalidates the whole, just as a defect in one link of a chain, however small, destroys the strength and perfection of the whole chain. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," said the Lord to that one who asked Him, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" He was doing his best to meet the requirements of the law. As far as he knew, he had scrupulously observed its commands: "From my youth up," he said, "I have kept all these things." And yet, with all this apparent perfection, he yet came short. To his question, "What lack I yet?" the Lord replied, "One thing thou lackest;" lacking that, he came short of all; failing, therefore, to keep the whole law, he was proved a *transgressor* of the law, and

his claim to eternal life on the ground of his obedience was at once silenced. So far from having attained the righteousness of the law, he had broken it, and though, perhaps, but "in one point," was "guilty of having transgressed the law" as a whole, and, as a sinner, therefore deserved not life, but death, the sentence of the law against sin.

Here, as in the case of Moses, we see the end of the law. Being "weak through the flesh," *i.e.*, having but a sinful, weak, imperfect instrument wherewith to work, its righteous requirements cannot be fulfilled by a sinner; neither can the apparently blameless young ruler "enter into life" by keeping the commandments, for he lacks "one thing;" nor can Moses, the faithful and obedient servant, the very embodiment and personification of law, enter into the promised land under the covenant of works, for he has spoken unadvisedly with his lips.

Then "by the law," or under the reign of Moses, can "no man" be "justified in the sight of God," (Gal. iii. 11;) for since the verdict of the omniscient and just God is that "ALL have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," (Rom. iii. 23,) it is clear that every one has, in one point or another, transgressed the limits of the law, which, far more than the law of the Medes and Persians, demands perfect obedience, and that, therefore, even though he may have sinned but once, (though few would have the hardihood to say that their sins were limited to one

sin,) he has forfeited all and every claim to the inheritance : he is a sinner, a transgressor of the law ; justice is against him.

And if justice is against him, he is, and must be, without hope, for the *Law* does not recognise *mercy*: “He that despised Moses’ law died *without mercy*,” (Heb. x. 28.) Moses himself did not obtain mercy: the excuse for his sin, which he might fairly plead,—the great provocation he had received,—nothing he might urge in extenuation, could procure him mercy ; he must die outside the blessed land. His otherwise blameless life, his marvellous obedience, his unwavering loyalty to God, all availed not : his *one* sin shut him out.

O reader ! let these lessons enter your heart. If you are still striving to keep the commandments that you may “enter into life,” see how forcibly God has shown you the great truth that “by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” You have sinned, you are a transgressor, you acknowledge it every Sunday in your prayers ; you often say, “We are all sinners.” Then as a sinner you must be shut out. You may have the most plausible excuses—your education, your very nature, your circumstances, your position, your temperament, your temptations ; but excuses will be valueless. Your “mouth will be stopped,” you will be “speechless,” when they are weighed by God’s unerring hand. You may have the righteousness of Moses, or of Saul of Tarsus, of “Noah, Daniel,

or Job," to set against your *one* or your *many sins* ; it will avail you nothing. That one sin shuts you out ; you have broken the law ; the sentence is *death* ; you cannot enter into life ; your chain of obedience may lack but one link, but it comes short ; you cannot enter in. The law (symbolised by Moses) can bring you, it may be, very near, even to the brink of Jordan, and within sight of the kingdom ; but it cannot bring you in ; it can only bring you to Jordan, (lit. the river of *judgment*;) it brings you to *death* ; it cannot bring you into salvation and life.

Now it is from failing to understand this foundation truth that so many come short of life and peace ; for, in one way or another, they are practically seeking to be justified by works, although they are perfectly ready to acknowledge the fruitlessness of human righteousness, and say that they know that they cannot hope to be saved by their own works.

There are some, for instance, who with real earnestness endeavour, by a diligent attendance to "religious duties," (as they are called,) a punctilious observance of forms and ceremonies, and a zealous performance of good works, to make their peace with God ; and who hope that, even though they may fail in much, the desire to do what is right, and the accomplishment of it in some degree, may, through God's mercy in Christ Jesus, bring them, if not into the enjoyment of pardon

here, at any rate into the kingdom of heaven hereafter. There is in their minds a strange confusion of law and gospel, of works and faith ; they speak of the mercy of God through Christ, yet they seek to *do* “the best they can” to earn or obtain that mercy, not perceiving that the two ways are utterly and totally opposed ; for “if by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace ; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work,” (Rom. xi. 6;) “if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise ; but God gave it to Abraham by promise,” (Gal. iii. 18.) They are of the class of those Pharisees* of old, many of them, like Nicodemus and Saul, men no doubt most conscientious and earnest, who sought to be justified by the *works* of the law,—by Moses. They are not “extortioners, unjust, adulterers ;” they are “not as other men are ;” they “fast twice in the week,” it may be, and “give tithes of all that they possess ;” “touching the righteousness which is in the law,” they may be “blameless.” They are “doing the best they can,” and they hope eventually to be saved. Moses did a great deal more than they did, but Moses did not enter into the land.

* I do not mean to use the term Pharisee in its common modern acceptation of “self-righteous hypocrites,” but as describing those who, like many in our Lord’s day, were truly conscientious earnest persons, “having a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge,” anxious to please and serve Him, and to attain to righteousness, but seeking it by the *works* of the law, (Rom. x.)

He sinned once and was shut out. They have sinned much oftener, they will come short of the glory of God.

Ah! but say some who may be reading these pages, it is quite true that Moses was excluded for one sin; but then he lived under the *law*, whereas we live under the *gospel*, and that is not so strict in its requirements. Perfect obedience was demanded then; but Christ introduced a milder scheme of salvation, under which the inexorable demands of the law are relaxed; and now if we only do *the best we can*, we may expect that God will be satisfied.

Now, my dear reader, what does this idea amount to? Why to this: that the gospel is a kind of modified law; that the sacrifices of the Mosaic law, that is, its ceremonial portion, are done away and superseded by the finished sacrifice of Christ; but that its moral portion, the precepts, which were to regulate the life and conduct, are still to be observed, so far as they are not essentially Jewish, in order to entitle a sinner to life. Then you are as much under the law as ever; nay, you are under a much stricter law. Remember how, in the Sermon on the Mount, (Matt. v.) our Lord explained the requirements of His law, and showed that whilst, under the Mosaic regulations, the actual commission of certain acts, *e.g.*, murder or adultery, exposed the doer to penal consequences, it was the inward thought of the heart, and even the look of the eye,

which, in the sight of God, constitutes men transgressors.

Now, if obedience to this new law is required, it is not less, but far greater ; it is not outward correctness of life, but inward holiness of heart. The moral precepts of the new dispensation exact much greater perfection than those of the old. If you are still to "enter into life" by "keeping the commandments," your obedience must be perfect to a far higher and more searching law. If salvation is to be attained by keeping the law, whether that of Moses or Christ, God, who is the same God in both dispensations, cannot vary His requirements ; on the contrary, He must have perfect obedience under the one, no less than under the other. You must either keep the commandments and live, or, failing to keep them, you must perish.

But there is another way in which many, who believe that salvation is unattainable either by ceremonial observances or by perfection of moral conduct, yet practically seek to obtain entrance into life by Moses, or the law. They acknowledge that they are sinners, that, having failed all their lives long to do that which they ought to have done, they deserve judgment as transgressors ; and they perceive plainly that it is not by multiplication of religious duties or good works that they can make amends for their sins. They believe that by the gospel was introduced another way of salvation, suitable, not to keepers of the law of God, but to breakers of the

law, or sinners ; that Jesus died for sin, and that it is by faith in Him alone that they can be saved. But, with all this, they have not peace with God ; they are not in the land of rest. Between them and rest, between them and enjoyment, there still rolls the river of judgment ; they feel that something must be done yet to bring them into the land of the living. It is not ceremonies of religion ; they have tried those, and failed : it is not morality or holiness of life ; that has been tried, and only brought home a deeper consciousness of sinfulness and transgression. What can be lacking ? A certain state of mind, characterised by true and deep repentance, downright earnestness to seek God and His glory, a determination to forsake all for Christ, feelings of peace and joy and delight in holy things. If this can only be attained, the love of God more realised, more love to Him experienced, greater elevation above the temptations, cares, and pleasures of the world reached, and a deeper repentance for and hatred of sin felt, then—then, it is thought, all will have been done, and salvation through Christ be apprehended.

But do you not see, dear reader, that what you are aiming at is as impossible as perfection under the law of Moses ? You are seeking to make your heart, your sinful heart, holy, loving, heavenly, in order to attain salvation. This was the way of life under the law : if only the two great

commandments in which all the law was embodied, perfect love to God and man, could have been kept, then the keeper of them would have entered into life. If you are seeking to realise certain feelings, and to reach a certain measure of holiness, before you can be saved, you are, to all intents and purposes, seeking righteousness by the works of the law ; it is by means of something you are endeavouring to do or feel, that you practically expect to obtain pardon, although you mix up the name of Christ with it. You do not understand the *gospel*: you may have a “zeal of God, but it is not according to knowledge,” (Rom. x. 2, 3;) you confound the law with grace; Moses with Christ; you do not perceive the meaning of the words “Moses is DEAD.” You are trying to bring him to life again, and hope by his help to be brought through judgment, and enjoy the promised land. Not so; you must “cease from your own works,” before you can “enter into rest,” (Heb. iv. 10,) Moses must die, or, rather, you must die to Moses or the law, before you can live unto God. The connection with the law must be broken by death before, under Joshua, or Jesus, you can possess the inheritance.

That it is only death that severs that connection is clear from the apostle’s words in Rom. vii. 1, “The law hath dominion over a man *as long as he liveth.*” He then illustrates that truth by a reference to marriage, showing that “a woman which

hath an husband, is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." The connection is such that, properly speaking, it can only be broken by death. "But if her husband be dead, she is free from that law."

Now a sinner is under the law, the holy law of God; and as a sinner, he is under its penalty, that penalty which is death; for having broken it, not only in one, but in every point, he lies under its sentence. Death therefore must take place before he can be free; *then* "the servant will be free from his master," for the law can only have dominion over a man "*as long* as he liveth." In order, then, "to redeem (or deliver) them which were under the law," God sent forth His Son—made under the law—"in the likeness of sinful flesh." He "took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;" and then "being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Thus He endured as man, and for man, the last penalty of the law. He took the sinner's place, became the sin-bearer—was "made sin for us," and died in our stead. "He took part of flesh and blood, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Man therefore, who, in his head and representative, the first Adam, came under

the penalty of death, endured in the second Adam, the head and representative of the family of the redeemed, that penalty, and thus was freed from it. It is of the utmost importance that the meaning and object of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ should be clearly understood as it regards our deliverance from the law, for there can be no happy service of God as dear children until redemption from the curse of the law is fully realised. I do not say there can be no salvation : I am persuaded that there are vast numbers who truly trust in Jesus as their Saviour, and who, thus trusting, *have* “everlasting life ;” for “whosoever believeth in Him shall never perish,” but who do not realise and enjoy the privileges to which, by such faith, they are entitled.

Salvation does not depend upon the degree of intelligence with which we apprehend the various and infinite results of the sacrifice of Christ, but upon faith or trust in that sacrifice ; a touch of the hem of His garment is sufficient to stay the disease of sin, and to heal of its plague.

A perception of the value and the consequences of that death, of its relation to the law and glory of God, of its bearing upon the standing and walk of the believer, is, however, deeply necessary if we are to attain this rest and joy and peace and power, without which the service of God is often but bondage.

Now it is the death of Jesus in the sinner’s stead

which atones for his sins as transgressions of the law of God, as given by Moses ; it is that death also which delivers the soul that trusts in Jesus from the dominion of the law, and from connection with it as a means of salvation.

It atones for his sins, and that by virtue of the substitutionary nature of the sacrifice. Jesus died not for His own sins, for He was without sin,—not to propitiate God, for it was God who in His love gave Him up to death,—not as an example of self-sacrifice to stimulate men to follow Him, and thus to gain eternal glory, for no example, however perfect, can be of use to those who are *dead* in sins—but as the Substitute of sinners. “*He died for our sins.*”

Jesus took our place. He was made in the “likeness of sinful flesh,” and thus standing in our stead, He incurred all the obligations which we had incurred, and voluntarily rendered Himself responsible for their fulfilment. As Judah said with regard to his brother Benjamin, “I will be surety for him. Let thy servant abide instead of the lad,” (Gen. xlivi. 9 ; xliv. 33;) so He who “sprang out of Judah” said, concerning those whom “He is not ashamed to call brethren,” “I will be surety for them; let Me abide instead of them.” And what was the obligation of which He undertook the fulfilment? Where did He find us? In what condition? Prisoners—guilty, condemned, because of our transgressions under the law, and

therefore under its curse. “Fast bound in misery and iron,” in darkness and the shadow of death. The law had dominion over us, and the sentence of that law was DEATH. Before anything else could be done, the just sentence of that holy law must be undergone ; before the prison doors could be opened, the uttermost farthing must be paid. Jesus, then, as the representative of sinful flesh, died for our sins ; and when He died, there was an end of sin, as regarded its legal penalty ; and an end being made of sin, the crime having been expiated, the claim of the law upon the sinner is discharged. He is delivered from the law, being dead to it by the body of Christ. The connection is broken by death, just as the connection between husband and wife is broken by death. The believer, therefore—that is, the sinner who, through trust in Jesus, is identified and made one with Him—is no longer under the law, either in order to obtain life by obedience to its commandments, or to incur its condemnation by disobedience. He is “not under the law, but under grace.”

Learn then, reader, the blessed meaning of the words, “Moses is dead ; arise, therefore, go over Jordan.”

The best efforts did not obtain salvation under the law of Moses ; for the very best man, Moses himself, only reached the border of the land to die, and “came short.” The best efforts are worthless under the gospel, for its message is not, “Keep the

commandments and live," but " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou *shalt* be *saved*."

NOTE.—The consideration of the truth conveyed in the 7th and 8th verses of this chapter—namely, that though the law is dead as to its condemning power over the believer, it is yet the rule of his new and risen life—is reserved for a future volume. I would only say here in anticipation, lest my meaning should be misunderstood, that although the believer is "*dead to the law by the body of Christ*," he is, nevertheless, "*under the law to Christ*." If "*made free from the law*," it is "*that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled*" in Him. It is as true of the Church in this dispensation as it was of Israel of old, that "*He brought forth His people with joy, and His chosen with gladness ; and gave them the lands of the heathen ; and they inherited the labour of the people ; that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws.*" (Ps. cv. 43–45.)

THE PASSAGE OF JORDAN; OR, ENTRANCE BY FAITH.

JOSHUA iii. 11.

“Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.”

WE have seen that, under Moses, the Israelites were unable to enter into Caanan, and that it was Joshua who was to cause them to inherit the land ; that, in like manner, all who enter into the land of blessing must obtain that entrance, not by “the law,” but “by grace,”—under Jesus the Saviour, not Moses the lawgiver. We now come to the consideration of the entrance itself, that is, of the manner in which the barrier that separated the people from the land of promise was passed. The barrier was Jordan ; the means whereby they passed it was *faith*. “By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land,” and it was equally by faith that they passed through Jordan.

The proceedings, as described by God to Joshua, were these : “The ark of the covenant of the God of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. . . . And it shall come to pass, as soon as

the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap," (iii. 11-13.) "And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; and as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) that the waters which came down from above, stood, and rose up upon an heap, very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zare-tan : and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests, that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan," (iii. 14-17.) "And the people hasted and passed over. And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the Lord passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people. . . . And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto

the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before, (iv. 10, 11, 18.)

We have here two special subjects for consideration: first, the work performed for the people, and, secondly, the way in which they availed themselves of it. Now a little reflection upon the nature of the work will be sufficient to show the striking manner in which it typified and represented the work of salvation, wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ by His death for sinners. The waters of Jordan were to be divided, and thus rendered harmless for the people, by the presence in them of the ark, sustained by the priests. Now the ark was the symbol of God's presence among the people: it was at the mercy-seat, the golden covering of that ark, where the cherubim stretched forth their wings, that God's presence was specially manifested; there was the Shechinah, or divine glory: "There," said the Lord, "will I meet with you, and commune with you."

The ark, composed of two materials, shittim wood, (or, as the Septuagint translates it, "incorruptible" wood,) and gold, contained the *unbroken* tables of stone, the law of God; and thus expressively symbolised Him who was both God and man, who could say, "Thy law is within My heart," and who kept that law unbroken. Like the wood, of earthly origin, Jesus took part of our flesh, but, like that incorruptible wood, "His flesh saw no

corruption," (Acts ii. 31, xiii. 37.) As the gold gave to the ark of wood its strength and value, so the divinity of Jesus gave to His manhood power, preciousness, and glory. We have, moreover, the express authority of the Word of God for thus interpreting the symbol of the ark ; for in Rom. iii. 25, where we read that "God hath set forth Christ Jesus to be a *propitiation*." we find, on looking at the original, that the Greek word translated "*propitiation*" is the very one that is used in that Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible from which our Lord and His apostles constantly quoted to describe the "*mercy-seat*." Christ, therefore, is that propitiatory, that mercy-seat, that meeting-place between God and sinners ; and we cannot err when we consider the ark of the covenant as the divinely-appointed type of Him in whom the Godhead dwelt, and who is thus Immanuel, or "*God with us*."

It was, then, the presence of this ark on the priests' shoulders in the midst of Jordan that rolled back its overflowing tide, and made the "*depths a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over*." Is the question asked, "*What ailed thee, thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?*" The answer is, "*The presence of the Lord ; at the presence of the God of Jacob*" (Ps. cxiv. 5, 7) those waters of the "*river of judgment*" were driven back ; the presence of the Lord sustained their accumulated weight, and not one drop thereof could touch an Israelite. "*They went through the flood on foot*."

How beautiful and expressive a type is here presented to us of the work which the Lord Jesus Christ has performed for us, and of the way in which a path has been opened for us by Him into the land of blessing and of rest!

It was the ark—that ark that had so often been sprinkled with the blood of atonement year by year, which, borne upon the shoulders of the priests, drove back those waters of death and judgment. And how was it that death and judgment have been abolished, and the way opened for us into the presence of God, but by the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, the great High Priest, took His place there, where the great stream of God's eternal judgment rolled in all its tremendous and overwhelming weight—where death, that death which was the due reward and penalty of sin, was inflicted! Then the mighty waters of judgment found a barrier,—then “death” was “abolished, and life and immortality were brought to light,”—then was opened, through the very gates of death, a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. Other priests, those which had infirmity, could only once a year, with blood of others, make their way through the thick veil into the presence of God. Jesus has opened the new and living way once for all.

It was as “the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water that the waters stood.” Those waters only touched their

feet. And similarly, in accordance with the primeval promise, it was but the “heel” of the “Seed of the woman” that was bruised. How short the victory that death achieved over Him! Three days and three nights only in the grave; enough to prove His actual death, no more. “The pains of death were loosed, because it was not possible that He could be holden of it.” Satan, who had the power of death, might scheme and plan. His willing agents might “make the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch,” but—

“Vain the stone, the watch, the seal,
Christ hath burst the gates of hell;
Death in vain forbids His rise,
Christ hath opened Paradise.”

He must rise “the third day according to the Scriptures.” It was but the heel that was bruised; when that royal, holy High Priest and Saviour touched the waters of judgment, they were driven back; and though He died in them, through death He destroyed death.

Other types of Scripture present the suffering aspect of that wondrous death. The flood, for instance, shows us the overwhelming judgment on sin which, overtaking Him who, “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” “died for our sins,” caused Him to exclaim, “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps: Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves.” The

scene before us exhibits rather the conquering aspect of the death of Christ. Both sides are true; but it needed many and various shadows to give the true form and character of the substance ; for He who sank under the weight of that judgment which “would have sunk a world to hell,” is the same who was able to take again the life which He had laid down, and, as the Resurrection, declare that death was abolished for His people for ever.

And as the ark alone completely and effectually accomplished the object for which it went down into Jordan’s stream, so Jesus alone by His one offering, once offered, completely satisfied the law of God, vindicated His majesty, and obtained eternal redemption for us. “Of the people there was none with Me.” “His arm brought salvation : His righteousness it sustained Him.” Who was there of the sons of men that could share with Jesus the penalty of death for sin ? Who could or did help Him to bear that fearful weight of judgment ? He was alone in it from the beginning to the end, and exclaimed at its close, “I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do.” Was not this pre-figured in the distance which was placed between the ark and the people?—“Yet there shall be a space between you and it ; come not near to it.” It must be made manifest that no Israelite had any hand or share in the marvellous work of driving back the flood. Had there been no such space ; had the people thronged around the ark, they might naturally

have been inclined to think that it was before *them* that Jordan fled, that they, from their numbers, their renown, or their valour, had something to do with the miracle. But the two thousand cubits between the ark and them would effectually silence any such presumptuous claim. “Boasting” would be “excluded.” And does not the death of Jesus on the cross stand as the alone cause of salvation? There was no death like that, no sorrows like His who endured it. He was the only one who could bear the sins of others, suffer the penalty, put away sin, and bring in an everlasting righteousness. He must save, and He ALONE.

And now let us notice the manner in which the people availed themselves of the work wrought out for them by the ark of God. It was by *faith*. They trusted entirely to the ark; believing that the power of God thus manifested was sufficient to restrain the waters, which otherwise would have swept them away, they confidently descended into the bed of the river, and quietly passed over. They ventured their lives, their families, their substance, everything on the ark of God; if that failed, they must be destroyed; but if God kept His word, if His power was enough, then they were safe. And their confidence was not misplaced. It was on no sandy foundation they built their hopes,—it was on the work and word of God; and believing in Him, they were not confounded: “All the Israelites passed over on dry ground;” not a drop of those waters of

judgment touched them ; for all that they felt, there might have been no river there.

Oh, how striking a picture of the *way* of faith ! What a *simple* way it is ! It needs no earthly wisdom to apprehend it : the most ignorant of the children of Israel could perceive it as well as the most learned ; the little child holding its father's hand could avail himself of it as easily as the mightiest warrior in the host ; and the mighty warrior, whether Caleb or Joshua, must take the same way as the little child that could hardly walk. There could be no difference, there was only one way ; men, women, and children, old and young, rich and poor, learned or ignorant, strong or weak, all must come, and all did come, by that one simple way. And what does Jesus say ? “ I am the Way : no man cometh unto the Father but *by Me.* ” You must trust in Jesus ; trust in His death ; believe that He has opened the way to God, and that, just as you are, whatever your character, antecedents, present circumstances, age, class, or creed, you may avail yourself of it. “ There is no difference, for all have sinned.” There are no works necessary, for He said, “ It is finished.” None are excluded that come ; for He says, “ Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” All that is needed is that you should trust *in Him* ; put your confidence in His work and word, and go forward—

“ Venture on Him, venture wholly ;
Let no other trust intrude.”

Thus trusting, you pass safely over, for “there is *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus.” The soul that trusts in Him “shall *never* come into condemnation.” “He that believeth in Him *hath EVERLASTING LIFE*, and shall never perish.” Such an one can say, with triumph and with truth—

“ There is no condemnation, there is no hell for me;
The fire and the torment my eyes shall never see ;
For me there is no sentence, for me death hath no sting ;
Because the Lord who loves me shall shield me with His
wing.”

Dear reader! can you say that you do trust in Jesus? I do not ask if you believe that there is a Saviour, and that Jesus is that Saviour. It is one thing to believe that Christ died for sinners, and another to trust yourself, your soul, your past and your future, entirely to Him. An Israelite might have seen and acknowledged the way, and yet, not trusting in it for himself, have been shut out from the land. The devils believe, but they cannot *trust*. Salvation is not connected with belief in certain facts concerning Christ, but with trust in Christ. “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

There was *only one* way, and that way was by trusting to the ark of God. An Israelite might have imagined that he could cross the stream better by constructing a bridge or building a boat; but that would not have been God’s way, and it would not have been the way of faith. Let us suppose for a

moment that one of the Israelites had set to work, with all the skill and energy he possessed, to make a bridge over the river. He might have collected the strongest stones, and having fitted them with the utmost nicety, have succeeded in constructing a way which, to his own and to his neighbours' eyes, seemed fair and safe; but I doubt whether it would have carried him over; for he would all the time have been rejecting and despising the way which God had devised and contrived for him; and such a despiser would never have reached the land into which God only brought those who *trusted* in His salvation. How foolish, moreover, as well as proud and self-confident, would any Israelite have been, who, instead of availing himself of that safe and prepared highway, had attempted to make another, and, as he would have thought, a better way for himself! He never could have accomplished it; he would not have had time enough; for while he would have been busy about his plans and works, the others would all have passed over, the ark would have left the place in the middle of the river, and the mighty, rapid waters would have again overflowed their banks, and have excluded him from that good land. He would have "come short" of the rest of God. If any one had adopted such a course, he would have proved himself to be both unbelieving and presumptuous;—unbelieving, because he did not trust the way which God had opened for him; presumptuous, because he judged that the way which

his own mind had planned, and his own hands constructed, was a better and safer way than that which God had devised and completed.

We do not read that such a piece of presumptuous and self-confident folly was perpetrated by a single Israelite; for the type we are considering is a type of the people of God, of those who by faith enter into His rest. But when we turn to present days, and regard the conduct of those who profess and call themselves Christians, who declare that they hope to go to heaven; what do we find? Alas! we see many and many an one who, though acknowledging that Christ is the way, yet attempts to climb up some other way, and who practically hopes that he will eventually escape the weight of God's judgment by something else that he is endeavouring to perform. Such an one is building a bridge over Jordan. Let me describe to you the operation, as it is commonly performed, and you may, perhaps, be enabled to recognise yourself as the performer.

The bridge which such an one endeavours to build is composed of many beautiful and apparently trustworthy stones. They are hewn with diligence, polished with care, set in their places with regularity, and regarded with much satisfaction. They have many names, and may vary in the order in which they come, according to the taste and ideas of the builder; but persons avail themselves generally of the same quarry, and the

bridges which they build have a great likeness to each other.

The first stone which is laid by them is frequently called "*Turning over a new leaf,*" and it is supposed that this affords a pretty fair foundation; indeed, few like to begin without it. The next goes by the name of "*Leaving off old habits.*" Then follow in succession, "*Attention to religious duties,*"—"Not doing anybody any harm,"—"Doing as we would be done by,"—"Uprightness in worldly matters,"—"Kindness to the poor,"—"Morality,"—"Amiability,"—"Attendance at the Lord's Supper,"—"Prayers,"—"Fastings," and many others of a similar character. No two bridges are exactly alike; that is, the stones of which they are composed vary somewhat in their order and in their character: but they are alike in two points. First, they all have the same keystone. It occupies the most important place in everybody's plan, and is the part of the bridge on which all rely, to a greater or less extent, for its stability and efficiency. This stone is called "*Doing the best I can.*" It is in great demand, and is invariably made use of by rich and poor, and a great many lay claim to its possession when they have it not; in fact, no bridge was ever built without it, or without the imitation of it, and the most implicit confidence is placed in it. Men in all ages have made use of it. Cain, Saul of Tarsus,—in fact, all who trusted in their own works, and went about to establish

their own righteousness ; and in these days it is equally prominent in the schemes of salvation of all who have not learnt that the best they can do is but bad. It is remarkable how, when every other prop is taken away, this is clung to with the strongest pertinacity ; and how continually it is the case that when, one by one, a sinner has been shown that his fancied merits are but sins, he invariably falls back upon this, and endeavours to settle the matter, by saying, “ Well, at any rate, I am *doing the best I can*, and no one can do more than that.” Oh, how seldom is it perceived that no one could enter the good land by *doing* anything ! It was by trusting, not *trying*, that entrance was to be obtained ; it is not the best *we* can do, but the work that God *has done* for us, that opens to us the way of life ; salvation is not by works, or doings, but by faith ; for “ he that is entered into his rest hath *ceased from his own works.*”

The other point of resemblance in all human schemes of salvation or bridges into the good land, is this :—that Christ occupies a certain place in them, that is, with all who profess themselves Christians ; for it is felt by such that He must have some part in the work of their salvation. After much labour in bringing as near to perfection as possible the various “ *good works* ” of which their bridge is composed, it is acknowledged that they are after all not quite what they ought to be, and that something is still lacking to make the

way of their salvation thoroughly trustworthy; just as any one who was endeavouring to cross the Jordan by the work of his own hands would perceive that the stones which he had laboriously collected and placed in their order yet needed something to bind them together to give the whole a certain consistency, and, in fact, to make his bridge perfect. Wherever, therefore, there might be any interstice or vacant space, he would have inserted some material like mortar to fill up such spaces, to smooth over irregularities, and to unite firmly the otherwise disjointed structure.

Thus it is with those who, hard at work to "do the best they can" to "get to heaven," yet feel conscious that they are not quite what they ought to be—that there has been many a thing left undone which ought to have been done, and that, somehow or other, the Lord Jesus Christ does not occupy so prominent a place in their scheme as He ought. Wherever, therefore, they perceive that they have come short, the "*merits of Jesus Christ*" are employed to supply the deficiency, to smooth over irregularities, and to give to their imperfect works the finishing touch which will confer that perfection which God requires; and thus, what with their own efforts and the merits of Christ, they hope that, after all, God will be merciful to them, and take them to heaven when they die.

Is this the case of one who may be reading these pages? *You cannot be saved.* Christ, and Christ

only, must be the Way ; and if you are mixing up anything of your own, however estimable and fair it may appear, you are not trusting entirely and simply to Him, and you cannot be saved. It may be that you cannot understand how such “good works” as I have referred to can be excluded from the plan of salvation, when so much is said about them in the Bible. True, a great deal is said about them, and they have their place, and will be found in the life of every real Christian ; but he must *be* a Christian, that is, *saved*; he must be in the land of blessing before he can begin to build the structure of a holy life. An Israelite might build and work as much as possible when once over Jordan, but his building and working would never help him over. It is “*having escaped*” that we are to “add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity,” (2 Peter i. 5-7.) We shall see presently, as we continue the consideration of the successive incidents related in the Book of Joshua, how the place in which the life of holiness is to be, and can be alone manifested, is there where the soul is conscious of having left behind the waters of judgment, and of having “passed from death unto life.”

That which now concerns you is not the way in which you are to behave for the future, but the way

by which you must *enter* into life. Again, I say, that Way is Jesus ; and let me beseech you, as you read these lines, to make use of Him as *the WAY* to God. Remember that “the time is short;” as it was with the Israelites, that the moment the last among them had crossed the stream, then the ark of the Lord passed over : “And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before,” (Josh. iv. 18.) The waters of judgment again rushed furiously down, and an impassable barrier was placed between any that might have delayed too long and the land of rest.

None did thus delay ; for as the type figures the passage of the *people of God* through judgment into rest, so it is evident that none could be excluded. But it was only those who trusted in that way of salvation to whom it availed ; and when once the last Israelite was “clean passed over,” the time was gone. So it will be, and, alas ! so it is often now. While you live your day of grace lasts, and till the Lord comes the day of grace for the world lasts ; but that day has its night. The judgment which God has threatened against an ungodly world “slumbereth not.” In His long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, the day

of grace and salvation is lengthened out; but when once the house is filled, the fated hour come, then will that long-restrained flood of judgment be poured forth, and He will “judge the world in righteousness.”

Numbers, alas! imagine that that day will never come for them, and because it is delayed, delay to turn to God; they fancy there will be time enough for them at the last moment to avail themselves of the way of salvation, and they linger on in fool-hardy confidence, and sleep on, only to wake up when it is too late, and to find that “the door is shut.”

A great ship, the *Central America*, I have heard, was once crossing the Atlantic; she had sprung a leak, and was in great danger, but the captain, who had weathered many a storm in her, trusted in her sea-going qualities, and believed she would last out to the end, and could not abandon his ship. Another vessel, perceiving her dangerous and sinking condition, drew near, and its captain, anxious to save the passengers and crew, shouted through his speaking-trumpet, “Shall I send the boats?” “Time enough yet,” was the reply. A few hours later the offer was renewed, but again the hoarse tones of the trumpet wafted across the waves, “Time enough yet.” Once again, as the shades of night drew on, the commander, unwilling to abandon the neighbourhood of the distressed ship, and seeing her gradually settling lower in the water, shouted imploringly, “Let me send the

boats for the women and children." But, again, and for the last time, the captain of the *Central America*, clinging to his confidence, and hoping that, after all, his ship might outlive the storm, answered, "*Time enough yet.*" Darkness came on, the hours of that fearful night rolled past, and when the light of another day fell on the waters, it revealed but one ship, where two had been before. The *Central America* had sunk with every soul on board, the victim of procrastination and misplaced confidence.

Thus perish thousands. A Saviour is near ; He calls again and again ; the way of salvation is open ; it needs but they should trust in Him who is that Way : but they delay, they hope for the best, they cannot believe that things will turn out badly, and they perish through unbelief.

Reader ! "Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." TRUST NOW.

TWELVE STONES ; OR, BURIED WITH CHRIST.

JOSHUA iv. 9.

“And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood : and they are there unto this day.”

“*They are there unto this day.*” There they are, out of sight ; they have never been seen again. The waters of Jordan, which returned unto their place, and buried those stones, still roll ceaselessly over them. Down in the midst of the river, in the deepest part, where the priests stood, still lie those stones. You might search for them, but you could not find them. They are hidden for ever.

“What mean these stones?” What may we learn from them? Do they not speak? Are they not “stones crying out?” Their mystic number, their remarkable resting-place, their buried existence—what does it all teach? Was it a mere superstitious, idle ceremony on Joshua’s part? Was it not rather another of those parables in

deeds which happened to the Israelites for “examples,” and “are written for our admonition.” God has thought fit to include this incident among the things that “were written aforetime;” we may be therefore sure that it is “written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.” May He, then, who wrote it graciously enable me to gather up and set before you some of the lessons which it is, I believe, designed to teach ! and may He enable each reader of these pages to apprehend and lay these lessons to heart.

It is evident, I think, that the twelve stones were meant to represent the twelve tribes. A reference to the 2d, 3d, and 5th verses of the chapter will at once manifest this. It is there related how another set of twelve stones, taken “out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the feet of the priests stood firm,” were to be carried over into the promised land, and erected in Gilgal ; and of these it was said, in the 5th verse, that they were to be “according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel.”

The twelve precious stones, moreover, which were set in the breastplate of the high priest, being engraven with the names of the children of Israel, “twelve, according to their names, according to the twelve tribes,” (Exod. xxviii. 21;) and the twelve gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, with “names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes

of the children of Israel," alike make it manifest that the stones buried in Jordan were intended to represent the whole assembly of the people of God.

But why were they to be laid there? What story could they tell in the bed of Jordan? We can easily see that the other twelve stones erected in Gilgal were to be a memorial of the power of God, as manifested in bringing Israel through the Jordan. They were visible, conspicuous tokens; and men, seeing them in time to come, were to ask, "What mean ye by these stones?" But these were to be unseen; no eye was henceforth to rest on them; they were to attract no attention; deep in the midst of Jordan, far from the light of day, their very existence being out of sight, they would be out of mind. Why were they laid there?

A deep and blessed truth lies where these stones lie. Though out of sight, they speak to us. Nay, it is in the very fact that they are out of sight that the lesson consists; it is their complete obliteration from view that tells us, in the language of parable, one of the most important truths concerning the family of God that the Scriptures contain.

The children of Israel had been now forty years in the wilderness, and those forty years had, so far as they were concerned, only served to manifest their innate sinfulness, their obstinacy, discontent, ingratitude, and self-will. They did, indeed, "prove" them, and bring out "what was in their heart," (Deut. viii. 2;) and in recording their history

during that time, God could only say, “*Forty years long* was I grieved with this generation. It is a people that do err in their hearts. They have not known my ways,” (Ps. xcv. 10.) Notwithstanding a succession of unparalleled miracles, their supplies of food, their shelter, their clothing, being all miraculously provided; notwithstanding the terrors of the law on Mount Sinai, “God speaking to them out of the midst of the fire;” notwithstanding judgments and mercies, they remained a rebellious nation, unworthy of any blessing, and only ripe for destruction.

But God was going to bring them into the good land of rest and promise: for His own name’s sake He was about to fulfil the promises made to Abraham, and to remember His mercy and truth. If He dealt with them on the ground of what they had been doing the past forty years, He must have excluded the whole nation from Canaan. But the land was a gift “by promise,” and, as we have seen, no amount of obedience to the law could entitle them to possess it; if their claim to it depended on their own righteousness, not only must the carcases of those who had sinned so long ago (Num. xiv.) fall in the wilderness, but their children also, who now were on the borders of the land of rest, must come short of its enjoyment.

No; they were coming into a new country, and before they could apprehend and make it their own, it must be strikingly manifested that “old things

had passed away, and that all things had become new."

The twelve tribes, the whole people, every one of them, must not only descend into the waters of judgment, but they must remain there; they must be buried there; and thence, as symbolised by the twelve stones brought out of Jordan, they were to emerge a new people, "born out of water,"—their birth-place, the very place of death and judgment,—to be a token and witness to succeeding generations and surrounding peoples of the grace and power of God.

In the laying of those twelve stones in the midst of Jordan was, therefore, strikingly represented the obliteration, by death and burial, of the past history of the tribes, of the very tribes themselves. They were to be "forgotten" as "dead" men "out of mind," (Ps. xxxi. 12.) But not only to the tribes of Israel did this apply; as the people of God, they were types of His people in successive ages; that which happened to them happened for examples; and we see in the remarkable conduct of Joshua with regard to the twelve stones an illustration of a truth relating to the children of God, the importance of which cannot be overrated—namely, that, as those who are united to Christ by faith, they are regarded by God as having been buried with Him, and that, having been thus buried, their past history, and not only that, but they themselves, as men in the flesh, and sinners

exposed to judgment, have been put out of sight, lost sight of.

“*Buried with Christ.*” Such is the teaching of this interesting type. Where the ark, upborne on the priestly shoulders, had for a brief time rested, there, in the very place of their feet, in the midst of the river of judgment, lay the twelve stones. The believer died with Christ. He says, “I am (lit. “was”) crucified with Christ,” (Gal. ii. 20.) When He, the Head, underwent the sentence of the law against sin, the members, all who ever have been or shall be joined to Him as members of His body, underwent it in Him. As “in Adam all died,” and thus every member of Adam’s family died, when he, the head of that family, died; so in Christ, all who are members of His family died when He died.

He bore the weight of those waters of judgment for them; they bore it in Him; He died under it; in Him they died under it; the sentence of the law was inflicted, and its demand, death, exhausted by the Head for the body; and, in the sight of God, to whom all future is present, and “who calleth the things that be not as though they were,” the sentence was inflicted on every one who is or shall be “partaker of Christ.”

And as they died with Him, so they were buried with Him. What is burial? It is putting out of sight that which we could not bear to keep before us. “Let me bury my dead out of my sight,” said

Abram even of Sarah, whom he had loved. How wonderful, how marvellous beyond all imagination does the burial of Jesus appear! Why was the "Prince of Life" laid in the grave? Why was it needful for Him to exclaim, "Thou hast laid Me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps?" Why did He descend into "the dark," into "the land of forgetfulness?" Why did He say, "I am forgotten, as a dead man, out of mind?" The only answer is, that "the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquities of us all." "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree;" and, as the scapegoat, bearing "all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, and all their sins," was sent away into the wilderness, "wherein dwelleth no man," and where those iniquities were, therefore, no more to be seen; so Jesus, dying for and in our sins, was buried, not only as the proof of death, but as taking away those sins into "the land of forgetfulness," and putting them out of God's sight. "He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He left our sins in that grave; He rose without them. The waters rolled over them, and, like the twelve stones under the waters of Jordan, "there they are unto this day." "The sin of Judah shall be sought for, and not be found." God hath said, "Their sins and their iniquities will I *remember no more.*"

Reader! do you apprehend this? Do you see and understand that if you have put your trust in Jesus, as the Israelites trusted in the ark of the covenant,

your past history, with all its sins, is as thoroughly put out of God's sight as those stones were hidden in Jordan? It is impossible to find stronger language than that which God has used to describe the complete removal of guilt from those who are in Christ. "Cast into the depths of the sea." "Blotted out as a thick cloud." "Cast behind His back." "Removed from us as far as the east is from the west." Such are the terms in which the God of all grace, who "forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin," describes the effect of that sacrifice by which Jesus, the Lamb of God, "put away sin." Our sins are forgiven us for His name's sake, and not only *forgiven*, but *forgotten*. "There is, therefore, now *no condemnation* to them that are in Christ Jesus." "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"

But a deeper truth than the obliteration of our sins is conveyed by the burial of these twelve stones. Although we may take the circumstance as an illustration of the fact that the transgressions of those who trust in Jesus are fully and everlastinglly blotted out by God, the type has a more accurate application to the *persons* of believers. The stones symbolised the tribes themselves. It was not only their sins, but they themselves, who were represented as dead and buried, and then as raised from the dead.

And such is the teaching of the Word of God concerning those who are in Christ: "We were

buried with Him by baptism into death.” Baptism, in which the believer is first put under the water, buried, and then raised up out of it, is the appointed figure to denote the “end of all flesh,” the obliteration of the “old man,” and the resurrection of the “new man,” the “new creation” in Christ.

It is said to be a “form” (lit. “a type”) of doctrine, (Rom. vi. 17.) The doctrine of which it is the form is that of union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. “We have been planted together in *the likeness of His death*,” as those whose “old man was crucified with Him,” (Rom. vi. 5, 6.) “Buried with Him in baptism,” (Col. ii. 12.) There is therefore an end of me as a sinner before God; I am dead and buried, put out of sight. Christ’s death and burial are mine by faith.

What an important lesson this teaches us of the utter corruption and unprofitableness of the flesh! When God looked upon the antediluvian world, which was filled with violence, we read that “the earth was corrupt before God,” “for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.” He therefore said, “The *end* of all flesh is come before Me,” and He declared His determination to kill and bury it. Accordingly He did so; He brought “a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy it,” “and all flesh died,” “and the waters prevailed, and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were

covered." God had buried the old creation. There was nothing else to be done with that which was thoroughly corrupt; it could not be improved or amended; there was nothing left for it but that it should be buried, put out of sight. Of this, St Peter tells us, baptism is the antitype, (1 Pet. iii. 21.) It is the symbol of the burial of the old nature, as of that which is irretrievably bad. The very same word is used with regard to the "old man," that is, the unrenewed self, that God used regarding the old world. It is said to be "*corrupt* according to the deceitful lusts," (Eph. iv.,) and as such is incapable of being restored or improved.

This solemn truth declares the hopelessness of all the attempts which are so often made under an awakened conscience to improve and amend one's self. It is not the improvement of self, of the old man, which can fit us for God's presence; it is the implantation of a new life, the "putting on" of "the new man." "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" God's verdict is that we are so "desperately wicked," so entirely "corrupt," so hopelessly "dead in sins," that there is nothing but execution and burial for us. When Jesus, therefore, in His grace took our place, He underwent the sentence "in the likeness of sinful flesh;" He "died for our sins and was buried." There was "the end of all flesh" manifested; and our baptism is the expression or symbol of union with Christ in that burial. It is the acknowledgment on our part

that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing, and that God's sentence upon us as sinners is just.

Do you acknowledge this, let me ask the reader of these pages? Or are you endeavouring by a series of religious efforts so to amend your ways and improve yourself as ultimately to have a good hope of God's mercy? If the latter is your case, you are endeavouring to dress up a corpse and fit it for the company of the living; you are attempting to make that life decent, religious, and respectable which God has declared to be corrupt, abominable, and only fit for the grave. You are trying to establish your own righteousness, when God has said that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Will the cloak of religious profession hide those rags from the all-searching eye of God? Granted that you are, and believe yourself to be, honest, sincere, and earnest; God knows you infinitely better than you know yourself, (for you only know what your own heart tells you, and that heart is "deceitful above all things,") and He says that you are "unclean" and "dead."

How, then, can I be saved? you say. How! why, by Christ; not by getting better and better, but by acknowledging that you are bad, and receiving Christ as your righteousness and your life; by ceasing from your own works, and trusting in His work. "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*"

We get, however, a further lesson from the subject under consideration. We learn not merely that the old nature is corrupt, dead, and only fit for burial;—that it is consequently hopeless to mend or improve it;—that all its efforts are therefore “*dead works*,” and valueless towards salvation; but further, that we are to consider the old nature as a thing with which we have done, just as we have done with that which is dead and buried.

This is the aspect in which we are told that God looks at those who are in Christ: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” (lit. there is a new creation:) “old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new.” God sees such no longer as what they *were in themselves*, but as what they *are in Christ*. “Ye are not in the flesh,” says the apostle, “but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” In God’s sight, “the flesh,” *i.e.*, the sinful nature, died with Christ. “Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.” Our old condition, therefore, is reckoned to have “passed away,” and we are said to “have put off the old man with his deeds;” for “they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts.”

There is therefore an end of our old sinful nature before God. It was judged, condemned, and executed when Jesus, “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” died for us: for “if one died for all, then have all died;” *i.e.*, we died in and with Him. This

does not imply that God is blind to our daily transgressions, our failures, our sins. No ; we know that He sees them, and we experience that, *as a Father*, He chastens us in respect of them. But as a *Judge*, He sees them not ; judicially, they have been put away, and we are regarded by Him as dead and buried sinners.

We are, therefore, to look at ourselves as God looks at us. He reckons us to have died with Christ ; and we are therefore to “reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, in Jesus Christ our Lord.” And herein lies a mighty principle of holiness. It is just in proportion as we reckon ourselves dead unto sin, that sin will have no power over us. What has a dead man to do with sin ? What has a dead man to do with his former occupations, habits, tastes ? Nothing ! absolutely nothing ! “ How, then, shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein ? ” To live in a condition from which I have been separated by death is a monstrous and unnatural existence. The believer,—he who is in Christ alive unto God,—is to treat himself, his old sinful self, as a dead and buried thing ; in fact, to leave himself, so far as his old ways, habits, affections, and lusts are concerned, in the place where the twelve stones were laid,—under the water,—out of sight,—“ *there unto this day.* ”

If, then, the old nature is seen in us—if angry tempers, sinful words, worldly ways, selfish actions,

are allowed to exist—what are we doing? Why! we are bringing the “old man with his deeds” to life again. It is just as if an Israelite had brought up out of the bed of Jordan the stones which had been once buried in its waters.

Oh! may we learn the blessed lesson this striking type sets before us—learn to “reckon ourselves *dead indeed* unto sin.” Then we shall make no “provision for the flesh, to satisfy the lusts thereof.” We do not nourish, feed, or gratify the tastes of the dead. Neither, if we consider that we have died, and are regarded by God as dead and out of sight, shall we be endeavouring to nourish and gratify the desires of that old nature which is “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.”

We shall keep our bodies under, and mortify our members which are upon the earth. We shall be living as those who are “alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord.”

TWELVE STONES; OR, RISEN WITH CHRIST.

JOSHUA iv. 21.

“And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones ?”

WE now come to the consideration of the meaning of Joshua’s action with regard to the stones taken out of the Jordan, and pitched in Gilgal, in the promised land.

This action was taken under the express directions of the Lord Himself, for we find it thus written:—“And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man ; and command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests’ feet stood firm, twelve stones ; and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave

them in the lodging-place where ye shall lodge this night," (iv. 1-3.) "And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelves stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the Lord spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there," (iv. 8.) "And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal," (iv. 20.)

We learn that these stones were to be "a sign," "a memorial unto the children of Israel." For in the 6th and 7th verses he says, "That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever." And, again, at the end of the chapter, we find that "He spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red

Sea, which He dried up from before us, until we were gone over; that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty; that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever," (iv. 21-24.)

The question, "What mean these stones?" is therefore not left without an answer. Erected in Gilgal, they were to be conspicuous memorials of the power and grace of God, witnesses to succeeding generations and surrounding nations that the hand of the Lord was mighty. The twelve stones thus symbolised what the twelve tribes were meant by God to be; and the living nation was intended to be in a far higher and truer sense a sign of the power and grace of God, than it was possible that inanimate stones could ever be. "Ye are my witnesses," said Jehovah to His people in days of old. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," said Jesus to His disciples. "Epistles of Christ,"—"Known and read of all men,"—"Written not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart," was the character of the early Christians; and it is to be nothing less than signs of the power and grace of God that the children of God are called upon to live in the present day.

We may therefore regard the place whence the twelve stones were taken, the position in which they were erected, the purpose they were to serve, as distinctly illustrating and typifying the *origin, position, and destiny* of the people of God.

Their *origin*. It was “out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests’ feet stood firm,” that the stones were taken. In fact, from the very place where the other twelve stones were deposited. That other set of stones represented, as we have seen, the people of God as buried with Christ, the passing away of “old things,” the putting of them out of sight as sinners. Their being laid in the midst of Jordan typified the truth of which baptism is now the appointed type, viz., that the believer is regarded by God as united to Christ in His death and in His burial. “We were buried with Him,” under the waters of judgment: and these deep waters have eternally hidden us, in our character as sinners, from the sight of a holy God.

But if Jesus died and was buried as the representative and head of those who are “His body,”—the Church,—He was also in His resurrection their representative and head. He said of Himself, “Except a corn of wheat die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;” and it was in death, in that wonderful travail of the Redeemer’s soul, that His seed, the countless multitude of the redeemed, were virtually begotten. In the sight of God, “who quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that be not as though they were,” to whom the future is a vast present, every one who ever has been, or shall be, united to Christ, was quickened when He was quickened. We “were

quickened together with Him;"—and were thus "begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." True it is, that it is only as one by one, "through the faith of the operation of God," we are made partakers of Christ, and "married to Him that is raised from the dead," that the actual birth takes place. But as every grain of the ear of corn is in the seed, as every branch and leaf that is subsequently and gradually developed is in the acorn that is sown, as Levi was "in the loins of Abraham" when Melchisedek met him, so every believer in Jesus was in Him when He died, in Him when He was buried, in Him when He was quickened. He did not rise alone,— "We were quickened together with Him;" and it is of those who are His flesh and His bones that He speaks in prophecy when He says, "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them," (Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16.)

But it is at the place of judgment, whether we take the cross or the grave as its expression, that the new life, the consequence of union with Christ, commences. "Except the corn of wheat *die*, it abideth alone." It was out of the dark waters of the river of judgment that the twelve stones were

taken ; it is the emerging from the water of baptism that represents the resurrection of the believer with Christ. There must be an end of the old life before there can be the commencement of the new. Then, when the old life with its deeds, whether manifestly sinful, or apparently righteous, has come to an end, the new life begins. The unprofitableness, corruption, and death of the flesh is confessed by the sinner when he comes to Jesus, to Him who has been crucified for him in his stead. As long as he imagines that he can make himself any better by means of prayers, religious duties, or efforts of any kind, he does not come as a lost sinner to Christ. But when he has learnt that "works done before the grace of Christ have the nature of sin,"* that they are therefore "dead works," and that his life is so bad that it is only fit to be put an end to, and obliterated ; then seeing in Jesus, the Son of God, one who, being "in the likeness of sinful flesh," represented his old life and nature, and thus died for him, and was buried for him, he comes to the cross, he is brought to the grave ; in other words, he is willing to take the place of death, and confessing that he is "undone," to receive a risen Saviour as his new life.

It is to this point that we are so slow to come, and especially hard is it for one who has lived an outwardly moral, decent, and so-called religious

* Thirteenth Article of the Church of England.

life. The publicans, the harlots, the sinners, willingly came to the waters of Jordan. They "confessed their sins;" having no good life to pride themselves upon, they came to John and were baptized of him. By that act they acknowledged that it was not improvement or amendment that they needed, but the washing away of the past; nay, more than that, the *burial* of the past in the waters of Jordan, as incorrigibly bad,—"*desperately wicked.*" But the Pharisees, the men who were outwardly correct, who were zealous in their devotions, regular in their religious duties, and "*as touching the righteousness that was in the law blameless,*" were "*not baptized of him.*" They could not consent to take the ground of sinners, to acknowledge that their past life was, though perhaps outwardly fair, inwardly and inherently bad,—that there was "*no difference,*" for that "*all had sinned.*" Seeking to "*establish their own righteousness,*" they would not "*submit themselves to the righteousness of God.*"

When, therefore, one of them, "*a master in Israel,*" came to Jesus for teaching, feeling probably that though he had conscientiously, like Saul of Tarsus, done his best, he yet needed a little to complete the perfectness of his life; the first lesson that the Divine Teacher taught him was the worthlessness of his life and works up to that moment, and the necessity of having an altogether *new* life, if he would "*see*" or "*enter the kingdom of*

God." "Except a man be born of water * (lit. "out of water") and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," were the startling words which fell upon the ear of the Pharisee, and told him that, unless he, like the publicans and sinners, was willing to acknowledge that his past life, nay, even his nature, deserved *death*,—that the past must be washed away and buried,—as represented by immersion in the waters of Jordan, it was impossible for him to take his place in the kingdom of God.

He must die,—the waters must cover him,—he

* It was evidently to the baptism in the waters of Jordan, which was attracting universal attention, that our Lord alluded in the above words. "Jerusalem also, and all Judea, and all the country about Jordan," were going out to John, "and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Coming to the water, descending into it, covered by it, emerging out of it, they expressed, as strikingly as any symbol could express, their acknowledgment of past unprofitableness, their worthiness of death, their need of a new life. It was to this water that the outwardly righteous would not come.

I need hardly say that the words afford no foundation for the figment of baptismal regeneration which has been built upon them. Baptism, we are told, is a "form (lit. *type*) of doctrine," (Rom. vi. 17.) but it is *only* a form. To make it more than a form, divinely appointed though it be, is to confound the symbol with the substance, the sign with the thing signified. When our Lord expounds to Nicodemus the *means* whereby he might obtain the new life,—"be born again,"—He points him, not to baptismal waters, but to Himself, the crucified and risen Son of Man received by *faith*: "Whosoever *believeth in Him* should not perish, but have *everlasting life*." The new birth is by faith in Jesus through the power of the Holy Ghost, (1 Peter i. 3-23.) Baptism is the exhibition of death, burial, and resurrection, by union with Christ—and is thus the symbol of that new birth.

must take the place of death,—emerge out of those waters of judgment, (“be born out of water;”) and having there laid aside the old man, “be born of the Spirit,” before he could enter into that kingdom of which every inhabitant is a new creature in Christ.

This, whether with publicans or Pharisees eighteen hundred years ago, or with us who live in the present day, is the very beginning of life. There cannot be a *new* life till the *old* is dead and buried. In coming to Jesus therefore, that is, in trusting in Him, we are made partakers of His resurrection and of His life; acknowledging, by thus coming, that death, the extreme penalty of the law, was the “due reward of our deeds,” we are identified with Him in His death. We were “crucified with Christ,” we “are dead with Him,” we were “buried with Him.” Being thus identified with Him, there is an end of us as far as regards the flesh, the old man in the sight of God. The law has done its worst, justice has been satisfied, the cross has slain and the grave has covered me, when, in my representative and substitute, who was “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” I died and was buried. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” They are “dead to the law by the body of Christ.” The life that the believer has in Christ is an entirely new, a resurrection life. It is not the continuation of the old life, improved and amended.

That, being desperately wicked, has, in the sight of God, come to an end, the “old things have passed away,” and the believer is a “new creature” in Christ. He is said to be “created in Christ Jesus,” (Eph. ii. 10.) He is no longer “in the flesh but in the Spirit,” (Rom. viii. 9,) and he is therefore free from the law of sin and death. The life which he possesses is one which is altogether removed out of the reach of condemnation, for Christ is his life, and he is “alive unto God in Jesus Christ.”

True it is, that though not “*in the flesh*,” the flesh is *in him*; he is in the body, and that body is a body of sin; and the presence of sin in him occasions him many a struggle and conflict. But his legal, his judicial, standing, being in God’s sight, “not in the flesh, but in the Spirit,” he is told to “reckon himself *dead* unto sin, but *alive* unto God in Jesus Christ.” Reckoning thus by faith, he is enabled to live in God’s sight a new creature; counting himself dead to sin, sin has no power over him, for sin can only work in a living body, whereas “he that is dead is freed from sin.”

We have, then, in the fact that the twelve stones were taken out of Jordan, from the very place of death and judgment, and were henceforth, instead of the twelve stones buried in the waters, to represent the tribes of Israel, the people of God, the deeply important truth exhibited to us that our new life only commences when, by faith, we come to Jesus crucified and slain, thus acknowledging

that death is our due reward, that, in the words of the hymn—

“ My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.”

Till then,—till a crucified Saviour is received by faith,—we have no life in us. In vain may we try to follow His example and tread in His steps, hoping that, by thus endeavouring, we shall eventually obtain salvation. It is not by looking to Jesus as our Example, but to Jesus as our Sacrifice,—our Substitute,—Jesus on the cross,—who “died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and was buried,” that we get the life. “ Except we eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, we have no life in us.” Our life *begins* by reception of a crucified Saviour. The waters of Jordan,—the cross,—the grave,—there is the birthplace of every child of God.

What next do we learn from the *position* in which the stones were placed?

They were in the land of promise ; they were set up ; they were steadfast ; and in each of these respects they were a representation of Israel in the land of Canaan, and thus of God’s people in the present day.

The twelve tribes were now in the land which had been promised to them, and were the virtual possessors of all the riches and blessings that belonged to that land. Those riches and blessings were no longer seen afar off, and hoped for by them;

their feet trod the very soil of Canaan ; it was given them for an inheritance. The waters of Jordan no longer rolled between ; its stream was behind them ; they were on the Canaan side : Egypt and the wilderness were amongst the things which were “behind.” In like manner, the believer is already in “heavenly places ;” “quickened together with Christ,” he has been “raised up together, and made” to “sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” As those stones, brought out of the darkness of Jordan’s bed, were now in the light of the sun of heaven, so the believer who, as a sinner, has been united by faith to Jesus at the cross, (“baptized into His death,”) is also united to Him in His resurrection, and is brought “out of darkness into His marvellous light.”

He is *in* the land of promise ; though not yet in heaven, he is already in “heavenly places,” and, being there in Christ, is “blessed with all spiritual blessings.” As Israel was then the virtual possessor of all the good land contained, so the believer, as one with Christ, is already the virtual possessor of all that the heavenly places contain : condemnation and judgment, the cross, the grave, all lie behind, and behind him for ever. “He shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” Life and light, liberty and peace, rest and joy, are all his, for they are Christ’s, and “all things are yours, for ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

How glorious it is to get, by God’s grace, a clear

and settled view of this unalterable position in Christ Jesus ! But how is it to be obtained ? say many. I cannot realise it, I cannot feel that I am perfectly delivered from judgment, I do not enjoy that life and light and liberty I wish I did. How is it to be obtained ? Simply by believing what God has said. He tells you, who trust in Jesus, that you are baptized into Him, that where He, the Head is, there you and all the members of the mystical body are in God's sight ; and you have to believe it on the authority of His word.

You are not called upon to verify it by your own experience or feelings. If you look at yourself, or at what you are in yourself, you at once see what you are in the flesh, and that, as in the flesh, you are not in heavenly places ; but if you look at yourself as God regards you, namely, as one who died with Christ, has been buried with Him, has been quickened with Him, and raised up together with Him, you at once see that you can, in God's sight, and as in Christ, be nowhere else than where He is, for He is the living Head of a living body. If you doubt this, you get, so far as your experience and feelings are concerned, to the wrong side of Jordan again, nay, perhaps into the very darkness of its waters of judgment ; but reckoning yourself, as God reckons you, to "be dead unto sin, but alive unto Him in Jesus Christ our Lord," you are the virtual possessor of all that He has in His risen life above, short of that absolute freedom from the

presence of sin, and that glory which is only to be entered upon at His coming.

It is, in fact, just in proportion as you take God at His word, in respect of the position in which He has placed you by virtue of your union to Christ, that you are able to enjoy and realise the spiritual blessings which are your present portion.

Then, further, these stones were "*set up*," "*pitched in Gilgal*;" they were not carelessly allowed to lie about anywhere, to be overgrown with moss and weeds, but they were erect, conspicuous. Joshua set them up there by God's command; and there they were to stand for succeeding generations.

Such was the position of Israel when placed in the good land by the power of God. Such is the position of the people of God, whether looked at in the aspect of the whole Church, or of individual members, "*living stones*."

Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! remember this: *God* has set you up where you are. It is His design, His power, His grace that accomplished it, that took you out of the "*horrible pit*, and out of the miry clay, and set your feet upon a rock." You had nothing to do with it yourself, any more than the twelve stones, or the twelve tribes whom they represented, had to do with getting into the position in which God had placed them. "*They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but Thy right*

hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them," (Ps. xliv. 3.) "Not for thy righteousness," it was said to them, "or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land," (Deut. ix. 5.) The position in which you now are is one into which you are brought solely and entirely by the grace of God; you have no claim to it by merit. God has put you there, and has "set you up." There is, therefore, no presumption or pride in taking the position which He has chosen to give you; you need not be afraid of "setting up yourself for better than other people." The world may say this of you; and those whose idea of salvation is connected with their own efforts and their own righteousness may inveigh against you as presumptuous for daring to say that you are "saved," that you are "seated in Christ in heavenly places," that you "have eternal life, and can never perish," because they think that by such assertions you lay claim to having perfectly fulfilled the law in your own person. But your claim is Christ: the inheritance, you know well, is not of "the law," but "of promise;" and being of promise, works are excluded; and works being excluded, boasting is excluded, so far as you are concerned—your boasting is in God. It is He who has raised up "the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory," (1 Sam. ii. 8.)

The stones were to remain there. They were not to be one day in the sunshine of Gilgal, and the next in the darkness of Jordan, one day erect and conspicuous tokens to God's power, and another carelessly trampled on by the passer-by. "Steadfast, unmoveable," is the motto for the believer in Jesus. "Stand fast in the liberty." Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. O dear Christian reader! are you seeking after *consistency*? Are you seeking to be the same firm, steady, shining Christian every day, and all the day, and everywhere? or is your life a halting, fitful, spasmodic Christianity? What we need in these days are not men like Mr Byends, who was born in the town of Fair Speech, and walked with Religion when she wore her silver slippers; but men whom neither the fear of man nor the love of the world will draw aside, who are not "tossed about with every wind of doctrine," and "wavering" like a wave of the sea; but who, with their feet firmly planted on the Rock of Ages, stand fast, and say with truth, both of the favour and frown of the world, both of pleasures and persecutions, "None of these things move me."

Such are the men who have brought glory to God; not your vacillating, timid, half-and-half professor, afraid to draw a sword or strike a blow, fearing to be called by names of reproach, for Christ's sake. The men that have turned the world upside down were "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Reader ! will you seek to be such ?

Lastly, let us consider the *purpose* which these stones were to serve.

They were to be tokens of the power of God ; they were, by their very presence, to arouse inquiry : "What mean these stones?" The "children were first to learn the wondrous history they commemorated, and then "all the people of the earth were to know the hand of the Lord, that it was mighty," (iv. 21, 24.)

Such is the purpose for which God saves sinners and unites them to Christ : "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." They are to "show forth the praises (lit. the virtues) of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light,"—"Lights in the world, holding forth the word of life,"—"A city set upon an hill,"—"Epistles of Christ, read and known of all men," are some of the many expressions used to describe the testimony which God's people ought to present to the world. As these stones were to be continual tokens of the wonderful power of God in bringing Israel through Jordan, so are His believing people to be the constant witnesses to His power and grace and love, in saving them from condemnation, and bringing them from "the power of darkness," into "the kingdom of His dear Son."

It is no longer by pillars or monuments, by a curiously wrought tabernacle or a gorgeous temple, that witness is to be borne to the existence and

character of Jehovah. "Living stones" are His memorials; and every soul that has been gathered from the kingdom of Satan, and brought into vital union with Christ, is to be a token to the world around that "the hand of the Lord it is mighty," that He is what He calls Himself, "the Saviour," "mighty to save."

It follows, then, that as the very presence of these stones in Gilgal was to be sufficient to arouse inquiry as to their meaning, so the existence and presence of a living Christian ought to excite interest and inquiry in the minds of those amongst whom he is placed. There should be something so remarkable, so peculiar, about the life and conversation of a Christian, it should be so different from that of the world around him, that men should be compelled to ask, "What does this mean?" He must be erect, steadfast, conspicuous; his words and works, his lips and life, should be such that men should take knowledge of him as one who is distinct in theory and practice from the world.

Let me ask of the Christian readers of these pages, Is this so with you? Is there anything in your character, words, and habits of life, so different from the world around you, that men are involuntarily compelled to ask themselves or others, "What does this mean?" Not that there is to be a forced singularity, a peculiarity for the sake of being peculiar; that were merely to copy the Pharisaism of ancient days.

It was by nothing *put on* as a garb that Moses, on his descent from communion with God in the Mount, attracted the attention of the Israelites : there was no effort on his part to produce an impression ; the shining of his face was the natural consequence of gazing upon God ; he could not help reflecting that glory which he had been beholding.

Thus should it be with us. If we have been, if we are, living with God, the result *must* be apparent ; our words, our actions, nay, our very looks, will reflect some rays of the mind of Christ ; and “the life of Jesus manifested in our mortal flesh,” while it may arouse the hatred and opposition of some, will attract others, and will, at least, arouse attention, and be a witness in a dark world to the glory of God. Oh ! that we might realise that this is the purpose for which God sends us into the world, as He sent His only-begotten Son. All His works, all His operations, are to reveal His glory, love, and power. “The heavens declare the glory of God.” The law on Mount Sinai manifested His holiness. The incarnation and suffering of the Son revealed the Father. It is now reserved for the children of God to show “that the hand of the Lord it is mighty,” to manifest, by the exhibition of a risen life, “what is the exceeding greatness of His power which He wrought (first) in Christ when He raised Him from the dead,” and

then in us, when He quickened us together with Him, and raised us up together, that thus "to principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known *by the Church* the manifold wisdom of God."

Two words more. It was "*the children*," who, in the first place, were to have their attention aroused by the stones, then "*all the people of the earth*." Such was the divine order then, and such it is still. "*Go home to thy friends*, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee," was the command to the healed demoniac of Gadara. First "*show piety at home*" is the command still. It is in our own domestic circles, in our home relationships, that the candle is to shine, that it may give "*light unto all that are in the house*." Believe me, that man's, that woman's godliness is of a poor order that does not compel those who dwell with them, whether wife or husband, parent, child, brother or sister, master or servant, to see that there is something in them which makes them different and distinct from the ways and works of the world around. We are often apt to reverse this order. Many are inclined to overlook the quieter duty of showing piety at home, and to substitute for it an activity in religious work abroad. No doubt it is easier to some to undertake work for God in spheres where the inconsistencies of temper and tongue which are displayed at home will not be seen; but God says, Begin at home, let the light

shine *there*. If it be a true, a burning light, it will not long shine only there; it will break forth through the chinks and crevices, and will shed many a ray out into the darkness of the night; but it must *begin* at home. Reader! I would say to you, as Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “What have they seen *in thine house?*” Has your sweetness of temper, your loving obedience, your cheerful self-denial, your steadfast faithfulness, caused those who dwell with you to take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus? Or has your home-life been a constant contradiction to your testimony abroad? Remember, the testimony of Jesus began by showing “piety at home.” He was “subject to His parents.” Seek, oh! seek, “to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things,” first of all in that station of life where He has placed you.

Christian parent, who may be reading these pages, see to it that it is, above all things, with your *children* that your life-testimony has weight; that you so live before them that they shall be constrained to see that the hand of the Lord it is mighty, and thus to seek to know His power themselves.

But let it further be noticed, that if it was the children who, in the first instance, were to have their attention and inquiries aroused, the testimony of the stones was to extend beyond. “All the people of the earth” were to learn about Jehovah. Though

our witness is to begin at home, it is not to end there. And this truth corrects another error we are prone to make. All are not exposed to the danger I have alluded to above, of substituting active work outside the house for quiet testimony inside it. Some err in another way : their temperament is different ; they shrink from a bold confession that may bring reproach ; they are inclined to limit their religion to the four walls of their own room, and, under the excuse that they do not like to make a parade, and that they think it right to "keep their religion to themselves," they abstain from the outward and active manifestation of the spiritual life which God expects from all His children. In one sense it is true our religion is a thing between us and God ; but though its origin and nourishment must be "in secret," its course and onward flow is to be open and decided. Let such take heed lest, under a plausible excuse, they really shrink from that plain-spoken and courageous confession of their Saviour which He has commanded. We are not to *seek* to be conspicuous ; but if our faces shine from communion with God, it must be noticed. If the "glory of the Lord has risen" upon us, the world will see it, and ought to see it.

The only Bible which the "people of the earth" will, in many cases, read, is the epistle presented by the life of a bold and decided Christian. God's chosen instrument for spreading the knowledge of

Himself in the world is the Church, built of “living stones.” May our lives be such that those around us may be arrested by our testimony, lived and spoken; and being thus led to inquire, “What mean these stones?” may they be further led to Him to whose grace and love and power we are and ought to be witnesses!

GILGAL; OR, THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST.

JOSHUA v. 2, 3, 9.

“At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. . . . And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you: wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.”

WE have now arrived, in our consideration of the Book of Joshua, at the period when the people, having safely passed the river Jordan, were encamped at Gilgal, in the land of promise. The wilderness with its wanderings lay behind them. They were in Immanuel’s land. But though it was the Lord’s land, and given to them for an inheritance, it was not yet appropriated by them. Though given to them by promise, the possession of it could only be enjoyed in proportion as they grasped it, and made it their own. “Every place that *the sole of your feet shall tread upon*, that have I given unto you,”

said the Lord, (i. 3.) They must go forward, claim the country in faith, and make it their own, or they would remain without enjoyment or realisation of its treasures.

Here, then, they stood ; the land lay before them ; but one by one its fortresses were to be subdued, its inhabitants conquered, and its cities and fields, its vineyards and oliveyards, appropriated by right of promise from Him to whom the land belonged. The principal of its fortresses was immediately in their way. Jericho, walled up to heaven, was in sight of their camp, and it was against this great stronghold that the efforts of the Israelites were to be first directed, as in some sense the key of the country. The inhabitants of the city had lost all courage when they heard of the drying up of the Red Sea before Israel, and of the defeat of the two kings of the Amorites on the other side of Jordan, (ii. 10, 11;) and now that to these startling events was added the miraculous drying up of the river Jordan, we read that “their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more,” (v. 1.) This, then, might have been conceived to be a favourable moment for at once advancing to attack the city ; for it was reasonable to suppose that such faltering hearts could have offered but little resistance to the army before which not only the hosts of the Amorites had yielded, but at whose approach the very sea had fled, and Jordan was driven back.

But the Israelites were not permitted to take

advantage of their terror. God Himself delayed their advance. Instead of directing them at once to lay siege to Jericho and overcome it, He caused them to wait, at the least, four days at Gilgal, "in the plains of Jericho." Such a delay might appear to be a grievous mistake; in an earthly general it might be deemed an irretrievable blunder; but the Israelites had Jehovah for their Captain, who was guiding them "by the skilfulness of His hand," and He could make no mistake. He halted His army at Gilgal for no unimportant purpose; the delay was intentional; before Jericho could be successfully attacked, work had to be done in their own camp; before "the sword" could be drawn upon their enemies, the "sharp knife" must be applied to themselves. Circumcision must take place before Jericho could fall.

The place that this incident occupies in the history of the Israelites, and the teaching which, I believe, it is intended to convey to us, for whose learning it is written, will appear somewhat more clearly if we for a moment review the events that preceded it, and their application to the spiritual history of the people of God.

Moses had died, and Israel, under Joshua, was to inherit the land. The law had failed to bring them in, and one, whose name was the "*Saviour*," had arisen to accomplish the purposes and promises of God. The destructive river that barred their progress had been passed in safety, its power hav-

ing been broken, and its whole weight sustained by the presence in its waters of the ark of the covenant ; the “ river of judgment ” lay behind them. By no efforts of their own, but by *faith*, Israel had crossed the barrier. The twelve stones buried under its waters, and the twelve stones erected in Gilgal, had exhibited to the people the respective symbols of their burial and oblivion as regarded the past, and of their elevation and establishment in a new position as living witnesses to the power of Jehovah.

We have seen how strikingly these facts illustrate the history and position of believers. Not by works of righteousness that we have done, not by obedience to the law, not under Moses, but by Jesus Christ the Saviour, are we brought into the land of the living. The terrible judgment, the sentence of death that barred, like the flaming sword at Eden’s gate, an entrance into the presence of God, was sustained by Him whom that ark typified : He underwent its curse : He sank under its waters : He died for us ; and by simple trust in His atoning work, in His substitution for us, we pass scathless into the place of blessing. “ Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ : by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,” (Rom. v. 1, 2.) The judgment is now behind us, so far as regards our sins ; having been “ crucified with Christ, we shall never come into condemna-

tion," (lit. the judgment.) The divine ordinance of baptism, the type of which was the burial and raising up of the two sets of stones, then sets forth our position in God's sight. "Dead with Christ," "buried with Christ," both as to past sin and as to our present evil nature, we are represented as "risen with Christ," both as to our standing before God, and as to our participation in His resurrection-life. We are "alive from the dead," "new creatures in Christ," "alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord." This is our judicial position, our actual standing before God. In Christ Jesus we are in the "heavenly places," with judgment behind us, as the Israelites were in Canaan, with Jordan in their rear. As, however, the land that lay before them was to be appropriated, as its strongholds were to be subdued, so, in order to our enjoyment of "all" the "spiritual blessings" wherewith we are "blessed in heavenly places," there must be the apprehension of the promises by faith, the making of the land our own by the planting of the foot on all that God has given us. We must claim and lay hold, or else we shall never realise the blessed portion which is truly ours in Christ.

As, moreover, with them, mighty strongholds were in their way, which, if not subdued, would effectually dispute their title and hinder their peaceful enjoyment of the country, so with us; many a lofty city within us has to be "laid low,

even with the dust," many a heart, now a fortress, possessed by the god of this world, has to be overcome and won for God.

Conflict, then, is the portion of the believer, as much as it was that of Israel. Conflict with "spiritual wickedness in heavenly places," as theirs was with flesh and blood in the land of Canaan.

But as with them it was needful that the second circumcision should take place before that conflict could be commenced, so with us must that take place which answers to circumcision, before we can successfully go out to fight the battles of Christ, and subdue those whose hearts are now fortresses garrisoned by Satan for places which may become fruitful gardens of the Lord. In the language of the story before us, we must learn to use the "sharp knife" upon the flesh in ourselves, ere we can go out with the "drawn sword" to contend with the powers in the world around us.

I would here beg my reader's most earnest and prayerful attention to the subject under consideration. It is one of which, I believe, the importance can hardly be overrated; for we live in days when there is a wide-spread and intelligent perception of the judicial standing of the believer, but where there is very little of the practical application of the separating and sanctifying truths of the Word to the heart and life. We, many of us, know what it is to be "seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;" our hymns and books and tracts are full of it, and

thank God that they are so. But are we as well acquainted with the *practice* of "cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit?" I fear that it is here we fall short. Doctrinal knowledge is not always followed by experimental application. It is truly blessed to "*know* these things;" but there is a greater blessedness, for Jesus said, "Happy are ye if ye *do* them."

The 5th of Joshua contains, then, lessons which I believe are perhaps more needed in many cases than any other; for it is to a neglect of the command there given that must be traced in great measure our want of power against the evil that is around us, our want of success in the work to which God has called us as "soldiers of Jesus Christ."

In order to gain a clear understanding of the truths here embodied, we must consider three particulars—what circumcision represents, why it was necessary in the case before us, and how it was effected.

First, then, what does circumcision represent? It was the "token of the covenant" betwixt God and His people, as embodied in Abraham, (Gen. xvii. 11.) It was an outward and visible sign or token of an invisible covenant; it was God's mark "in the flesh;" for He said, "My covenant shall be in your flesh," (Gen. xvii. 13.) It did not make Abraham a child of God, but it was to be marked on him because he was such. He had been accounted righteous before God long before he was circumcised; at

least fourteen years had intervened between the day when “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness,” (Rom. iv. 3,) and the day when he, his son, and his household were circumcised. (Compare Gen. xv. 6 with Gen. xvii. 24, 25.) It was, therefore, the “seal of the righteousness which he had, yet being uncircumcised,” (Rom. iv. 11.) Circumcision, then, represents that outward and visible mark impressed on all those who are “the children of faithful Abraham,”—God’s mark in their flesh.

What is, then, that mark now? However the ordinance of baptism, as the token of admission into the visible Church, may, in some degree, answer to circumcision, it clearly does not exhaust its meaning.* The various references to circumcision in the Old Testament show that it was meant to convey a further truth, that it was in-

* I do not deny that circumcision was, in many respects, the type of baptism, the ordinance by which we are admitted into the *visible* Church. On the contrary, I firmly believe that it was such, and, moreover, that the doctrine of baptism, *viz.*, the death and burial of the old man, carried out in daily life, precisely answers to the doctrine taught by circumcision, *viz.*, the mortification of our members which are upon the earth. As, however, in the history I am considering, the doctrine of baptism appears to be typified by the twelve stones, so the application of that doctrine seems to be exhibited by this second circumcision. Having, therefore, dwelt upon the doctrine in the previous chapter, I concern myself especially with the application in the present, and, for that reason, make but little allusion here to circumcision as the type of the outward ordinance of baptism.

tended to denote the practical separation from all that defiled. (Deut. x. 16, xxx. 6; Jer. iv. 4, ix. 26.) The last reference especially shows that, being uncircumcised in heart, the house of Israel was regarded by God as being as much uncircumcised as Egypt and Edom, and Moab and Ammon. It was in the practical separation from sin that true circumcision consisted, more than in the performance of an outward rite. “Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter,” (Rom. ii. 29.) Do we then ask, What is the mark by which the children of Abraham, the people of God, are to be recognised now? What is “the token of the covenant,” “the covenant in their flesh?” What is it but the practical putting away of sin from our lives, as it has been judicially put away from our consciences? Is it not this to which St James refers, when, after describing the children of God as having been begotten with the Word of truth, (i. 18,) he immediately adds, (as circumcision took place quickly after birth,) “Wherefore, *lay apart* all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness?” St Peter, in the same line of thought, speaks of those who have been born again by the Word of God as “new-born babes, *laying aside* all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,” (1 Pet. ii. 1.) What is this but spiritual circumcision, God’s mark in the flesh, that practical righteousness which is the seal or outward token of imputed righteousness?

Circumcision is expressly said by the apostle Paul (Col. ii. 11) to denote that “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh” which was figuratively set forth “by the circumcision of Christ,” when we were “buried with Him in baptism,” but is to be practically carried out in the case of those who are therein “risen with Him” (not by the *opus operatum* of an outward ordinance, but) “by *faith* of (or in) the operation of God,” as they daily bear out in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, and “mortify their members which are upon the earth.”

Nothing less than the thorough, decided separation from sinful ways and habits, though they may cling to us, and be as much part of our nature as a man’s skin is part of him, is, I believe, God’s mark in the flesh, *i.e.*, in the outward visible life of His people. It may be as painful as circumcision, and I doubt whether the mortification of our members will ever be anything but painful to the flesh; but painful or not, the responsibility of God’s children to carry it out is clear. “If thy hand offend thee, cut it off. If thy foot offend thee, cut it off. If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.” Such is the teaching of the Master Himself. Circumcision, then, in few words, represents “the putting off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts,” that “cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit,” which is the duty of those who are risen with Christ, and seated in heavenly places.

But next, why was the circumcision necessary in the case before us ? The reason of it is given in the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th verses of the chapter, to which I would beg the reader to refer. The fact was that the children of Israel, one and all, were uncircumcised ; “ the reproach of Egypt ” clung to them, that is, the mark or badge of Egypt—uncircumcision—was still upon them ; although, nominally, the people of God, they were without the distinctive mark of such people ; there was no difference between them and the uncircumcised Egyptians ; this was their reproach and shame.

It was indeed a shame to them that, being, as they were, the people of the living God, having been “ taken from the midst of another nation by a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm,” that they might be a peculiar people, they had omitted to exhibit that mark of peculiarity which God had enjoined upon them. During the forty years’ wanderings they had relapsed into carelessness ; for some reason or other they had not executed upon their flesh the sentence of death which had been commanded, and the habits of the Egyptians in this respect had become their habits. This was their reproach ; and how could they be permitted to advance in the character of the army of God to fight his battles, whilst the first duty enjoined upon them as having enlisted in His service was neglected ? How could they with a good conscience execute judgment upon the nations of Canaan for

their terrible sins, while they refrained from judging themselves? If they shrank from using the knife upon their own flesh, could they be in a position to draw the sword upon others?

Impossible! "Judgment" must "begin at the house of God." Egyptian habits, conformity to Egypt's ways, must be cut off and put away, in order that, with a clear conscience, and with the boldness of those who knew that they were indulging no sinful compliance with the habits of the country from which they had been separated, they might go forth to fight and to conquer in the name of the Lord of hosts. It was indeed necessary to go forward in the work of the Lord, but that work could not be undertaken by those on whom reproach rested. For that reason it was that "at *that time* the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel," (Josh. v. 2.)

Is not this a truth of immense importance for us? What do we see on every hand? Activity in God's work, zeal and energy in His service; evangelists going hither, and missionaries sent thither; societies formed, and working hard for the destruction of Satan's kingdom in the world; operations of all kinds carried out; evangelical sermons preached, and tracts scattered broadcast through the length and breadth of the land; all this we see, and God be thanked for it. There is room for it all, and much more. But if we examine closely into the inner lives, the habits and ways of a very large num-

ber of those engaged in all this work, do we find that they are as careful in putting away from themselves everything they know to be opposed to the mind of God? Have they fitted themselves by careful self-judgment for carrying out the purposes of God in reference to those that are still without? Nay, do we not, on the contrary, find that great activity in the outward service of God is not only compatible with, but is often used as a set-off against, great carelessness as to the personal walk and habits of many an one whose "praise is in all the churches" for apparent self-sacrifice in the work of the Lord? Is it not often the case, that, like Peter, they are first and foremost to draw and use the sword upon others with great apparent zeal for the defence of the truth, while they are neglecting the plain but more un conspicuous duty of watching and praying?

Brethren in Christ! for to such I would earnestly speak, (and whilst I thus speak, it is with the earnest prayer that I may profit by the solemn teaching of this passage myself,) how is it with you? Are the ways of Egypt,—the habits of the world, from which you profess to have been separated, still clinging to you? Have you carelessly allowed yourself to continue in the indulgence of that which you ought to have cutoff and abandoned long ago? Whilst preaching to and teaching others, contending for the faith, and giving of your substance to the furtherance of the gospel, have you been conscious that you have been harbouring secret things which the Word of God

condemns? that you have been reluctant to apply to your own heart and life the trenchant truths your lips have been enforcing upon others? Whilst you have constantly prayed "Thy will be done on earth," have you in every known particular sought to do that will yourself?

You have rejoiced in the apprehension of the blessed truths symbolised by the burial and elevation of the twelve stones; you have sung and preached about "being crucified with Christ," "buried with Christ," "risen with Christ," and "seated with Christ in heavenly places;" the risen life of the people of God has been a theme on which you have delighted to meditate, and perhaps to speak. Have you forgotten that immediately upon the bringing of the twelve tribes into the land of promise, the circumcision followed? You have dwelt much on the important truth that it is not by putting away evil that life can be obtained, and you have striven against the legality and self-righteousness which such a view of the way of salvation would promote; have you been as careful to dwell upon and to apply to yourself the equally important truth that, although holiness does not and cannot precede salvation, it is the immediate object and consequence of it?

If circumcision of the heart, if practical separation from evil in the life, has been neglected, is it any wonder that your efforts to advance the kingdom of God in the world around you have borne but

little fruit? It is he who purges *himself* who becomes a “vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work,” (2 Tim. ii. 21.) And I am sure that, if we faithfully look into our own hearts and lives, we shall see that much of our failure in work, and even of our unreadiness to undertake work, has arisen from the fact that our consciences have not been clear, that we have not been determined in “cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Oh! let us see to this. Let us judge our own selves. Let us not be allowing ourselves in the ways of an evil world, from which we acknowledge Jesus died to deliver us, (Gal. i. 4.) If we have this hope, let us “purify ourselves, even as He is pure;” and let us exercise a godly jealousy over ourselves, lest we put hands to the work of the Lord which have not been first exercised upon ourselves. Better, a thousand times better, to wait the four days at Gilgal, than to rush up with uncircumcised hearts to Jericho.

What is it that is *the* great stumbling-block with the unconverted? Not that it forms a valid excuse to satisfy their own consciences, or will stand them in any stead before the bar of God; but what is it that they constantly allege as one great hindrance to their acceptance of the gospel? It is this, that they see that the preachers and teachers of that gospel, in so many instances, deny the power of

godliness in their own lives ; that whilst they preach Christ as a Saviour from sin, and hold up the standard of New Testament holiness, they contradict it daily and hourly by conformity to the world, and compliance with its ways.

Thus the “reproach of Egypt” is on them, and the world laughs at their profession and their preaching. And justly so ; for how can they believe that the cross of Christ can be effectual to *their* salvation, when they see that it fails to deliver *you* from the commonest temptations ? that it has not crucified your love of ease, your slothfulness, your irritability, your love of eating and drinking, your fondness for dress, and show, and rank, and pleasure, your desire for money, and all that money gives ? Little will they believe what you tell them of a heavenly inheritance, while they see that your affection is set on things on the earth. Is not this one great cause of the unconverted state of children of Christian parents, of servants of Christian masters, of congregations of Christian ministers, of husbands of Christian wives, of wives of Christian husbands ? They see that you do not carry out the command of God to be holy “in all manner of conversation,” and they justify themselves in refusing to obey the command of God to “repent and believe the gospel.”

Oh ! may the exhortation ring in our ears and sound in the inmost recesses of our soul, “ Be ye holy, for I am holy,” “ Circumcise yourselves to

the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your hearts."

Before, however, passing on, we must notice, with regard to the time when this circumcision was effected, that it was after the passing of the Jordan, and after the instruction conveyed by the burial and erection of the stones. On this point I would content myself with saying briefly, what, if space permitted, might be profitably expanded, namely, that it is only when we know the power of the resurrection of Christ that we can enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made conformable to His death, (Phil. ii. 10.) It is only in proportion as we apprehend what it is to be dead with Christ and risen with Him that we are in a position to "mortify our members which are upon the earth." This truth is strikingly taught in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, of which the former halves are entirely occupied with exhibiting the position of the Church as united to a *risen* Saviour, while the latter halves dwell upon the responsibility of the members to put away and put off all manner of evil.

It is true that the Israelites incurred blame all the time that they neglected the command to circumcise themselves in the wilderness; but it was only when their wanderings were over, and they stood in the land of rest, that that command was enforced upon them. Continuance in evil is never justifiable; but it is the knowledge of the truth

that qualifies and strengthens us to put away the evil. Seek to enter into the realisation of the risen life, not merely as a doctrine, but a fact, and then, in the power of that life, purge away all iniquity.

And now, lastly, *how was the circumcision effected?* The answer is twofold. Joshua was the agent, the sharp knife was the instrument. Let us consider both.

Joshua was the agent. We are not to suppose, of course, that Joshua's own hand effected the circumcision of "all the people;" it is of course understood that, to perform so extensive a duty, many hands must have been at work; but in the scriptural account, the intermediate agencies, the many hands, are left out of sight; they are not mentioned; while it is twice said "Joshua circumcised the children of Israel," "them Joshua circumcised." Our attention appears to be designedly drawn to him as the immediate agent in the operation.

Now, Joshua is but another name for Jesus; the one is the Hebrew, the other the Greek name, meaning the Saviour, and they are used interchangeably in the New Testament, (see Acts vii. 45; Heb. iv. 8.) It is, then, to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom Joshua so strikingly typifies, that our minds are directed as the one to whom is committed the work of spiritual circumcision.

And is not this blessed? For do we not, in the first place, feel how powerless we are in the matter;

how thoroughly our own efforts have again and again failed, as we have tried in our own strength to break ourselves of some evil habit, or to cut off some darling sin which was as dear, nay, perhaps, we thought as necessary, to us as a right hand or foot, or eye? How often have we made the strongest resolutions, and, after earnest prayer, determined at every cost to strip ourselves of the sin which clung to us as a garment, which we felt was hindering us in Christian work, damaging our influence for God, and bringing reproach upon our profession, and, consequently, upon Him by whose name we were called! And what has been the result? Resolutions broken as often as made, till at last we have almost felt that it was of no use, that we must give it up, and be content to be defeated.

But why was there this constant failure? Why was our experience so sad? Why were we constantly feeling that "the law in our members was bringing us into captivity to the law of sin," and compelling us to say, "The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do?" So that we could but exclaim, under an enlightened conscience but an impotent flesh, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24.)

Our experience was nothing in advance of that described in Rom. vii. 14-24, because we had not learned that the answer to the agonising inquiry, "*Who shall deliver me?*" was "*Jesus Christ our*

Lord." If that passage is closely analysed, it will be found, I believe, to describe the struggles of an awakened, nay, a quickened and converted heart, after obedience to the holy law of God. But they are the struggles of a heart that is ignorant that Jesus is "the way" of obedience as much as He is the way of salvation. The question all through is one of self *versus* sin. "I" and "me" occur no less than thirty-nine times; Christ not once. No wonder that the end is failure. "I" may as well try to make "myself" holy as to save "myself." I can do neither the one nor the other. Jesus is made of God unto us sanctification (or holiness) as well as righteousness (or justification), and it is no more possible for me to circumcise my heart by my own strength or resolution than to save myself by my own righteousness. It is Jesus who must carry out the circumcision. What, then, have I to do? Simply to put myself in His hands to carry this out, as I put myself in His hands to save me.

And then, in the second place, is it not blessed to see that He is powerful to do this; that "the government is upon His shoulders, and that He is able to order and establish His kingdom with judgment and justice?" He is able indeed "to subdue all things to Himself;" and it is a glorious promise of which we may claim the fulfilment, "*The Lord thy God* will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul," (Deut. xxx. 6.) It was the apprehension of

Jesus as the way of holiness that caused the apostle to turn his cry of agony into the shout of triumph, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Till this is apprehended, our efforts after spiritual circumcision will be but unsuccessful. He is the Almighty agent who still circumcises the children of Israel, and rolls away their reproach.

But if Joshua was the one whose hand carried out the circumcision, the "sharp knife" was the instrument that effected it. And what is it that is described as "powerful and *sharper* than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart?" (Heb. iv. 12.) What but the Word of God, that sword of the Spirit, the mighty instrument which, in the hand of Jesus, is the weapon whereby not only we overcome the wicked one, but whereby we also are enabled to cleanse our own ways. The Word of God, in respect of its cleansing power, is frequently referred to under the similitude of water; and the same purifying and separating power is aptly set forth under the figure of the knife. As the knife was used for the circumcision, as it is the instrument which the husbandman handles in order to purge or cleanse the vine, that it may bring forth fruit, so also it is by its action that the "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness" is laid apart, and we are prepared, as the branch by the removal of the bark is prepared for the graft, to

"receive the engrafted Word." As it was by the knife that the grave-clothes which encompassed Lazarus, and hindered him from walking, working, and speaking, were loosed, so it is by the application of the sharp edge of the Word to our ways and habits that we are freed from anything and everything which, like the uncircumcision of Israel, is a remnant of our worldly bondage, and hinders us from running with liberty in the way of God's commandments.

It is, then, a solemn question with which to conclude the consideration of this portion of our subject, do we permit the sharp edge of the Word to come into contact with, and to take effect upon, our hearts and habits? Do we not often deaden its force, and dull its edge, so far as in us lies, by accommodating its precepts to our own experience, by applying its commands, in their fulness and intensity, to other ages or other persons? Or do we not often so interpose excuses of our own fabrication, relating to our constitution, our temperament, our circumstances, our position in life, and so on, between our consciences and its "piercing" and "dividing" edge, that its separating and cleansing power is not felt? It is easily possible to "handle the Word of God deceitfully," and to "keep back" our "sword from blood." We are but too ready to spare ourselves; Satan is always at work, and on the watch to hinder the effect of the Word of God, whether it be by snatch-

ing it away in its character of seed, lest the sinner should believe and be saved, or by blunting it as it falls upon the conscience of the saint, lest the sin which so easily besets him should be cut off and laid aside. Let us see to it, then, that we bring our hearts and consciences into close and constant contact with that Word which is the sharp and mighty instrument for purifying us from all iniquity ; and putting ourselves into the hands of Jesus, entreat Him to make that Word effectual by the Holy Ghost for the removal of everything that is contrary to His mind and will, everything that would hinder us in His service, or would bring reproach upon His people and His name.

Then shall we know what Gilgal means ; for we shall be conscious of His voice saying, “ This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.”

THE PASSOVER; OR, REDEMPTION REMEMBERED.

JOSHUA v. 10.

“And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even, in the plains of Jericho.”

THE people were now, to a great extent, prepared to undertake the work to which they were called, viz., to enter upon the conquest of the land of Canaan, that it might become “the Lord’s land,” and, as the ministers of His judgment, to exterminate the enemies of God. Having purged themselves from uncleanness, and the reproach of Egypt having been rolled away from them, they were fitted to stand forth to carry out the work of the Lord.

But although the great obstacle to their service was removed, we find that several things are yet recorded as intervening between the scene at Gilgal and the attack on Jericho. These things

were three in number. We are told that they kept the passover in the plain of Jericho ; that they exchanged the manna, the food of the wilderness, for the old corn of the land ; and that the Lord Himself assumed the command of their host. Now these three things are not recorded without a purpose : having been written for our learning, it is doubtless intended that they should convey some instruction to our souls ; and the very fact that they are related as intervening between the second circumcision and the siege of Jericho, is in itself sufficient to show us that they represent certain facts in the experience or history of the spiritual Israel, the people of God, which must take place before they can be “ perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

What is it, then, that we may learn from the first, the keeping the passover in the plains of Jericho ?

The passover feast, we know, was originally instituted at the time of the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, on that night when, by means of the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels of their houses, they were saved from the terrible judgment which the destroying angel inflicted on the impenitent Egyptians. The only thing which, on that night, interposed between the Israelites and death, was the *blood*. “ When I see the blood, I will pass over you,” was the message to them from God. It was only the blood that saved them from destruction.

It was a striking and impressive type of the redemption of a sinner from the judgment which his sins deserve “by the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot,” “for Christ, our *passover*, is sacrificed for us.” As the lamb died instead of the first-born ; as the Israelite, trusting to that blood, was then and there saved by the express institution and decree of the God of judgment, who thus revealed Himself at the same time as the God of grace ; so Jesus, “the Lamb of God,” suffered for sins, the just for the unjust ; and the sinner who trusts in that death, who relies on that Saviour, is, by the authority and decree of God, “delivered from the wrath to come.” Instead of death, “he hath everlasting life ;” he “shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” He hath “redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

Now the yearly feast of the passover was to keep in the continual remembrance of Israel the great fact of their redemption. It brought before their minds that they had been bond-slaves in Egypt, that they had deserved the judgment of God ; but that by His sovereign mercy and free grace they had been saved from judgment, by the blood of the lamb, and being delivered from the power of Egypt, had been made the children and servants of the Most High God. They were commanded to “observe this thing for an ordinance to them, and to their sons, *for ever* ;” and it was specially added,

“And it shall come to pass, *when ye be come to the land* which the Lord will give you, according as He hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s pass-over, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.”

The time was now come when this command was to be obeyed. The people were to be brought into remembrance of that “night much to be observed,” of that blood which redeemed them from their previous bondage. And, therefore, being come into the land so long promised, and at the very time of the year when the feast was due, we are told they kept the passover in the plains of Jericho.

They were in a new country, but they were not, therefore, to forget the old, the foundation truth. If it had not been for the blood of the lamb, they would have been in Egypt still, slaves to Pharaoh. It was to the blood they owed it that their feet trod the plains of Jericho, that they were in the midst of the good land beyond Jordan. Surely it was fitting that their redemption out of bondage, and from the iron furnace, should be specially brought to mind; for thus their hearts would be lifted up with fresh gratitude to Him who had redeemed them, and brought them to Himself.

They had arrived, it is true, in a country where Pharaoh did not reign, and where the terrible judgment inflicted by the destroying angel at midnight was not again to be inflicted ; but redemption was none the less to be remembered. The nation was now, so to speak, forty years old ; forty years had elapsed since the “beginning of months,” on the passover night in Egypt ; but that birthday was not to be forgotten. They had learnt many valuable and important lessons during the wanderings in the wilderness, and last, but not least, the wondrous truths which we have seen conveyed in the passage of the Jordan ; they had arrived at years of discretion, but the first principles of their education, the very A B C of their training, was not to be lost sight of. Nay, because of growth and progress, it was the more needful that they should recall to mind the foundation truths on which everything else stood, and thus trace every blessing, every mercy, every step, back to the source whence all originated, the free love and mercy of Jehovah, in redeeming them by the blood of the lamb.

Do we not therefore plainly see the reason why the keeping of the ordinance of the passover was specially enjoined upon them on their coming into the land which the Lord gave unto them, and why it is specially recorded that they “encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover in the plains of Jericho?”

And has it not a voice for us? Is the grace of God in providing the Lamb, the marvellous conde-

scension of the Lord Jesus in becoming Himself our passover Lamb, the shedding of His “most precious blood,” the salvation thus obtained for us, the immunity from judgment, the deliverance from the slavery of sin and Satan and the world, are these “principles of the doctrine of Christ” ever to be forgotten? Is any growth in knowledge, any progress in spiritual life, any realisation of higher truth, to efface from the memories of the people of God the fact that they were lost, condemned sinners, that they were redeemed by blood, even the precious blood of God’s dear Son?

Surely, every true-hearted believer in Jesus, every one who has, in any degree, realised his own sinful and lost condition, will at once reply—No; whatever else I forget, I never can forget my Saviour’s death for me; whatever else I have learned, can never cause me to lose sight of the fact that—

“My sins deserved eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.”

Yet it is from this great foundation truth that Satan would seek to lead us away, and thus cause us to attempt to satisfy ourselves with either intellectual knowledge or active service, whilst forsaking, so far, at least, as regards the practical realisation, the true place of blessing,—the place where true humility can alone exist—the cross of Christ,—and neglecting the real and only source of strength—communion with a crucified and risen Saviour, who has said, “He that eateth me shall live by me.”

I need not particularise the numerous plausible ways in which the enemy of our souls seeks to attain this end, and thus to foster pride, “which goeth before a fall.” Every one who is conscious of the plague of his own heart, and is not ignorant of the devices of Satan, will at once feel how frequent, how subtle, and how often successful those efforts have been ; and will at the same time heartily endorse the truth, that strength and joy, humility and love, zeal and watchfulness, have only flourished in proportion as he has kept looking to the blood, trusting to the Lamb that was slain.

Oh, how often has the hardness of heart which intercourse with the world has caused been subdued ! how often has the thick earth-born cloud, which has seemed to shut out eternal things, been dispersed ! how often has peace been restored to his weary soul, and life been poured afresh into his fainting spirit, as, after wanderings and backslidings and fruitless efforts to restore himself, he has cast himself, on the old terms and with the old story—

“ Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,”—

at the feet of that Saviour, and received afresh into his aching heart the blessed tidings through believing which he first found peace with God—
“Justified FREELY through His BLOOD!”

Yes; great as our knowledge may be, active as our zeal in service may be, advanced as our age in Chris-

tian life may be, the foundation can never be left, the blood can never be forgotten. Was it not in order that the weak and halting disciples might ever hold fast the *beginning* of their confidence, that the gracious Lord, after breaking the bread and pouring out the wine—the symbols of His broken body and shed blood—said unto them, “Do this in *remembrance* of me ?” (*i.e.*, as a reminder.) And was it not well for the strengthening of their faith that, not yearly, like the feast of the passover, not half-yearly, as with some modern churches, or monthly, as others, but week by week, Lord’s day by Lord’s day, (as we may fairly assume from the New Testament,) the early Church “came together to break bread ?” Does not the commemoration of the Lord’s Supper, where aged saints and youthful believers meet round the same table, where extensive knowledge, and great experience, and long and active service take the same place as the trembling faith of one who has, it may be, but just touched the hem of His garment, bring to the memory and heart of every child of God the remembrance of a common ruin, a common salvation, and of a common Saviour? We are all one there; and the ground of our unity, as well as the source of our one life, is the blood of the Lamb. There all pride must be abased, as we together confess that “we do not presume to come to this Thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies,” and as we partake of that bread and wine which set

forth the sacrifice of Him who was made sin for us, and redeemed us from the curse of the law by His most precious blood.

Probably it was on account of the knowledge whereto they had already attained, and of the wondrous nature of the truths into which he was leading them, that Paul, after opening out to the Ephesian Church the height of their calling as seated together with Christ in heavenly places, bids them look at the deep and horrible pit from which they had been brought up, and says, “Wherefore remember, that ye who were once far off are made nigh by the *blood* of Christ.” The Ephesians were being led in reality into that field of knowledge and that phase of experience of which the exact type is the entrance of Israel through Jordan into the rich earthly blessings of the promised land. They were being taught the wondrous truth that a believer in Jesus has not only “redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins,” but also that by union with that same Jesus he is identified in His death, burial, and resurrection; that he has, as before explained, been “crucified with Christ,” “buried with Christ,” “risen with Christ,” and that, as such, he is “seated together with Him in heavenly places,” and “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” He was taught that Christ’s death was his death, Christ’s resurrection his resurrection, Christ’s position his posi-

tion, and Christ's portion of blessing, even "all spiritual blessings," his portion.

Was not this marvellous teaching? Think of a "worshipper of the great goddess Diana" being transformed into a servant of the living God—one who had been dead in trespasses and sins, the fearful abominations of heathendom, being alive in Christ—one who had been "darkness" being now "light in the Lord,"—and of his being told that he was not merely saved from the penalty of his sins, but that he was also a partaker of the glory of God! Such an one would surely need to be reminded of the ruin in which he had been found, and of the costly price which that God, "who was rich in mercy," had Himself paid to redeem him from death and hell. The greater the height of glory to which he was called as a child of God, the more need that it should be seen that the foundation on which the whole superstructure must rest, if it was to be immovable and sure, must be the blood of the cross.

And what do we learn from the anthem of praise that swells upward from the lips of the great multitude that no man can number, as, clothed in white robes, and with palms in their hands, they stand before the throne? They have many of them learnt much, many of them suffered much, many of them achieved much; they have toiled, and fought, and conquered. But what is the burden of their song? They do not speak of their

victories, their sufferings, their experiences—"Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Why are they there? Is it their faithfulness, their righteousness, their knowledge, their labour that has earned for them that marvellous position? "They have washed their robes and made them white *in the blood* of the Lamb; *therefore* are they before the throne of God."

And will not the same song resound through eternity? When millions of ages have passed away, when the story of earthly life appears as an infinitesimal point in the great vista of eternity; when, no longer knowing in part, the happy believer shall have been, through countless ages, drinking at the fountain of knowledge itself, and learning the marvellous secrets of Jehovah; will all that has passed dim the glory of the cross? Will not "the night in which He was betrayed" be as clearly before the eyes of the ransomed Church of God as the night of the Lord's passover was year by year brought before Israel though centuries had passed away? Will the new song, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy *blood*," ever become old? Nay; as ages roll away, that will be still the "night much to be remembered:" as the glories of eternity are unfolded, the glory of the cross will never pale; great as the splendour of the throne will be, its main glory will be, that in its midst stands "a Lamb as it had been slain."

The brightness of that city which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, streams forth from *His* presence; “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the LAMB is the light thereof.”

This keeping of the passover in the plains of Jericho tells us, then, that the precious blood that saved us is never to be forgotten, whether we be babes in the Christian life, or, like Joshua and Caleb, experienced veterans, fathers in Christ. But does not the fact of its being kept before the Israelites advanced to actual conflict with the heathen powers that ruled the land that was to be brought into subjection to the God of Israel, teach us a further lesson? As surely as spiritual circumcision, the putting away of all known evil, is an indispensable preliminary to victorious conflict, so surely must we engage in that conflict with hearts fresh from the scene of the passover. The truth of Christ crucified for me, the clear appreciation and remembrance of redemption by blood, of what I myself owe to the grace of God, must be a living power in my own heart, if I am to wield with energy and success, in the wars of the Lord, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” It is when the lips are touched with a live coal from the altar of sacrifice that the heart is ready to respond to the inquiry of God, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” “Here am I, send me.”

And if this be so, does it not point out the secret of much of our want of success, who are striving to wage the great conflict with the powers of darkness in the world around us? When the early Christians "turned the world upside down," and cast out the power of Satan, as manifested in the religion of Paganism, what was the secret of their success? "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb." "*The blood is the life*" still, and if we would have the same success, we must use the same means. It is not merely by the preaching of the gospel, but by that gospel being preached from hearts that are, as it were, baptized in the blood of the cross, and by lips that are touched with the live coal, that the strongholds of sin and Satan will be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

And what, in like manner, is one great secret of success, in waging that inward and mysterious warfare against the lusts, desires, and inclinations of the evil nature which still dwells in us, but the cleaving to the crucified and risen Lord, with full purpose of heart? Is not faith still "the victory which overcometh the world?" And what is the object of that faith? In whom is it that we must trust for victory, on whom must we lean for strength? Jesus, the Lamb that was slain, is the One on whom our helplessness casts itself; and it is from His death, appropriated by faith, as the passover lamb, eaten, was the strength of the Israelite, that our strength is derived. It is at His

cross that I see “the body of (my) sin destroyed, that (I) should not henceforth serve sin.” It is there, that, seeing that “he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin,” I learn to “arm myself with the same mind,” and reckoning myself dead unto sin by the cross, to live as one who is now alive unto God in Jesus Christ.

If this be true, does it not follow that the cause of our frequent, daily, hourly failures, that the reason why defeat takes the place of victory, and that, instead of always triumphing in Christ, we are often brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members, is the fact that, like the Jews of old, we have “forgotten our resting-place?” We have permitted the trials of life, its cares and sorrows, or its riches and pleasures, to deaden our sense of the unspeakable preciousness of the blood of Christ; our activity in service has often prevented us from quietly keeping the feast of the passover, from recalling the memories of redemption from bondage; our very growth in knowledge and experience has, it may be, caused us to lose sight of the fact that we are but blood-bought sinners; and, whilst rejoicing in the height of glory to which we have been called, and in the position of resurrection in which we have been placed, we have forgotten the “hole of the pit whence we were digged.” No wonder, then, that the power of sin within us has got the upper hand, and that we

have been overcome of evil. It is, alas! too true that many are obliged to say—

“ Where is the blessedness I knew
When *first* I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word ?

“ What peaceful hours I once enjoyed !
How sweet their memory still !
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.”

Is it so with you, reader? Are you conscious of light without love, service without power, profession without practice? Are you feeling the Christian life a bondage instead of “perfect freedom?” Come back to the blood. Look unto Jesus again. He says, “I will heal your backslidings, I will love you *freely*.” It is on the *old* terms that He bids you return. He says, “Ask for the *old* path, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” If *you* have left *your* first love, He has not left His. He knows “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” The blood is as powerful as ever to “break the power of cancelled sin,” to speak peace to the heart. You may in truth say—

“ Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
(Hath) never (lost) its power!”

Come to that “fountain opened for sin and for all uncleanness.” His word is still as true for a

returning backslider as for a repenting sinner: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" and thus you will prove, with Israel, though it may be after as many years of wandering, how joyful, how refreshing, how blessed it is, once again to "keep the passover in the plains of Jericho!"

“THE OLD CORN OF THE LAND ;” OR, “STRONG MEAT.”

JOSHUA v. 11, 12.

“And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the self-same day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land ; neither had the children of Israel manna any more ; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.”

THE passover had been kept in the plains of Jericho. The blood by which they had been redeemed had been called to remembrance. It was not sprinkled again on the doorposts and lintels ; that had been done once for all ; redemption could not be repeated ; but it was called to remembrance ; and each family of Israel standing round the “ lamb roast with fire,” had again commemorated the night on which they had been brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm.

They thus, on entering upon possession of the promised land, took their stand on redeeming grace,

and ascribing their position as a ransomed people to the sovereign love of God, acknowledged that they “got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them ; but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them,” (Ps. xliv. 3.) They openly professed that, though brought into a new country, they stood upon the old ground ; that though they had passed through Jordan, and were now in the position, typified by the twelve stones, of a people “alive from the dead,” they were as much as ever indebted to the blood of the lamb for all their blessings.

But although the source of their very life as a nation could never be changed, and was, therefore, always to be had in remembrance, we see that a remarkable change took place in their daily food. The manna, by the miraculous supply of which their life and strength had been day by day maintained, was now to cease, and, in its place, the people were to partake of the “old corn of the land.” The “light food” suited to the wilderness was to give place to the strong rich produce of the plains of Canaan, and on this the people were to feed before the sword was to be drawn against the inhabitants of the land.

And all this is but the type and shadow of truths which deeply affect the spiritual welfare of the “ransomed of the Lord.” Like Israel, the believer, as we have seen, can never leave the

precious blood. He must ever remember that he has been “redeemed,” “justified,” “washed,” and “brought nigh” by the blood of the Lamb. After years of pilgrimage, after heights and depths of experience, nay, after ages of glory, he must still and for ever say—

“I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand;
Not e'en where glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land !”

But though this is and ever must be true, though the source of his life, the origin of his blessing, must be through eternity “the Lamb as it had been slain;” though he never can leave the beginning of his confidence, “Jesus Christ, the same *yester-day, to-day, and for ever*,” he yet is conscious, and is taught in the Word of God, that the spiritual food by which the life of his soul is maintained must be, in a certain sense, changed and suited to the requirements of his age and condition. That which was fitting for him as a “babe” in Christ will not do for him as a “young man” or as a “father;” and it is beautiful to see that the same provision is made for his spiritual sustenance, at the different stages of his life, as was made for the natural sustenance of Israel after the flesh.

Let us awhile meditate on the instruction here conveyed to us; and may the gracious and Holy Spirit of God, whose blessed and appointed work it is to take of the things of Christ and to show

them unto us, mercifully open the understandings of both writer and reader, that such meditation may be sweet and profitable. It will be probably desirable to dwell first on the meaning of the *manna*; then on that of the *old corn* of the land; and, lastly, on the lesson taught by the *exchange* of the one for the other.

First, then, what did the manna represent? It was the gift of God to the Israelites to sustain their life, when, otherwise, they would have died of hunger. "Thou gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger." It was heavenly food: "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

We need be at no loss to ascertain the antitype. "I am the bread of *life*," said the Lord Jesus. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," (John vi. 48-51.) And again: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger," (ver. 35.)

As the manna was the gift of God to dying bodies, so is Jesus the gift of God to perishing souls. As the manna came down from heaven into the desert, so Jesus came from the Father's presence into this world of want. As without

feeding on the manna the people would have died, so without receiving Jesus the sinner has no life in him. As it was by daily gathering of that heavenly food that the Israelites' life was sustained, so it is by constantly partaking of Jesus by faith that the life of the spirit is maintained from hour to hour and from day to day.

And each of these points is full of instruction, which the believer, as well as the yet unsaved reader, will do well to ponder.

“The bread which giveth life” is a gift, a free gift from the God of grace. No Israelite deserved the manna. He had no more claim or right to it, on the ground of his character or conduct, than he had, when an idolatrous slave in Egypt, to redemption by the blood of the lamb. His sins in Egypt excluded him from the benefit of redemption, if his own merits were taken into consideration; his murmurings by the Red Sea, and in the desert, disentitled him to any supply of his daily wants as that which he could claim. He was indebted to the free sovereign grace of God for the gift of that food by which his life was sustained day by day. It was a gift, nothing but a gift, and as such was not of works, but of grace.

And has the believer any more right to have his spiritual life maintained? Must not every one who has travelled even but a few days on pilgrimage confess that, if his only hope of constant renewal of life rested upon blamelessness of conduct, or

sinlessness of life, he must, in that case, be utterly without hope?

Does he not acknowledge that he is dependent for strength, moment by moment and day by day, upon that gift of God, that bread of life, even Jesus, by receiving whom, through faith, his life is constantly renewed?

Yes; it is blessed to understand and to remember that Jesus, all He is, and all He has, is ever the free gift of God, as free to the believer as to the perishing sinner. No length of service, no growth in knowledge, can ever give the believer a legal claim to that which is a gift. If we could by any means set up a right or ground on anything we had done or been, a claim to Jesus, He would no longer be the gift of God; He would be the reward of merit, and then the maintenance of the life which we received by faith *without* works would be effected *by* works; or, in other words, "having begun in the Spirit," we should be "made perfect by the flesh." But this can never be so. Ages of obedience to the law of God could never remove a sinner redeemed by blood from the ground of *grace*. Having been "justified by faith," by faith he must ever live. And living by faith is only, in other words, depending for daily, nay momentary, strength, on the supply of that which, like the air we breathe, is the free unmerited gift of God.

And is it not equally blessed to see that, as the gift of Jesus, as life to the perishing sinner, was

“of grace,” so the continual supply of that same Jesus to the saint is of grace also. As long as they were in the wilderness, the manna was not taken away. They constantly deserved to have their supplies cut off; but though they were frequently chastised for their murmurings, idolatries, and sins, we do not read that the manna once failed them.

Has God been less gracious to His people now? Has He withdrawn His “unspeakable gift?” They may often have failed to apprehend its preciousness, they may have taken but sparingly of that which God has given liberally, they may have been straitened in themselves, but they have not been straitened in God. As surely as the sun rose on the tents of Israel was the manna given; as surely as the throne of God is established in heaven is the supply of every spiritual need bestowed upon the people of God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is rich comfort for any poor child of God who feels that, by frequent backslidings and wanderings of heart, he has forfeited every claim to the provision which God has made for His people in Christ. Forfeited every claim! He never had a claim to forfeit. He is as dependent this very moment on the sovereign grace of God as when he first came, a trembling sinner, to the fountain of the blood to be cleansed. He had no merit, no claim then; he has none now. And if he has no claim, and if mercy is free, without money and

without price, he may come to take a fresh supply now with *boldness*. His claim, if he must have one, is his want ; his plea, God's grace : and when he comes, just as he is, to have his emptiness satisfied out of the fulness which dwells in Jesus, simply because he is empty, needy, and undeserving, he will prove how rich that grace of God is, which continues the supply of "all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus," on the sole ground of sovereign mercy and love. Reader ! the manna lies around you : you need not perish of hunger ; stretch out your hand, receive the gift now ; arise, eat, and go in the strength of that food.

Then, further, the manna came from heaven. It was not the product of the earth : the sand of the desert might have been cultivated for centuries, ah ! for ever, before it would have yielded "angels' food." It was not manufactured by human hands ; no hands of "cunning workmen" would ever have succeeded in making "the bread of heaven." The skill and labour of all Israel could never produced that food which maintained the host for forty long years in "the great and terrible wilderness." Their supply of "daily bread" came straight from heaven, fresh from the hand of God.

And whence comes the "bread of life?" whence that supply for the soul, of which, if a man eat, he shall never die, but of which, if he eat not, he has *no life* in him ? "The bread of God is *He* which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the

world." Life is not within us by nature; it is from without, even from on high. "Ye must be born again," (marginal reading, "*from above*,") said Jesus to Nicodemus. No cultivation of the barren soil of the natural heart can produce life. It is a creation, even a new creation from above. The elixir of life cannot be discovered by the wisdom nor manufactured by the skill of man. "Eternal life is the gift of God in Jesus Christ our Lord."

Hence we may perceive the folly of attempting to produce or gain life by self-improvement. It is like watering and sowing the sand of the desert. The theory of developing the eternal life out of the soil of the natural life is as futile as that of attempting to bring a clean thing out of an unclean. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and no cultivation, improvement, or development will ever make it anything else. He who succeeded better than any other living man, who had so beautified his life that he could say, that "touching the righteousness which was in the law" he was "blameless," and that he therefore had "more" to trust in than "any man," yet describes his condition as being "in the flesh," and his righteousness as one of those things which he was willing to count as "loss for Christ." In other words, he confessed that, after all his efforts, he had failed to produce eternal life from within his own heart, and he was content to receive Christ as his life instead.

It is, then, by trusting in Jesus, that is, by receiving Him as the gift of God, that we obtain life—spiritual and eternal life. It is not by looking to self, poring into our own hearts, or multiplying religious efforts, that we can be made alive unto God, but by “looking unto Jesus.” It is by the coming of Jesus from heaven into this world, by His being bruised, even as “bread corn is bruised,” by giving His flesh that He becomes the life of the world, and that “he that believeth on Him hath everlasting life.”

The manna, then, represents Jesus as the free and undeserved gift of God to His needy people for the sustenance of their life during their pilgrimage in a desert land, as that life which is communicated to the soul, not developed from it, and is received by faith on the ground of grace.

And now, what does the “old corn of the land” represent? Can there be any other food for the soul of the believer than Jesus Christ? Impossible! His own words plainly declare that His flesh and His blood is the only food of His people. That period can never arrive, either in time or eternity, when that food can be exchanged for any other means of sustenance.

We are, then, shut up to interpret the old corn of the land as typifying Christ equally with the manna, only with this distinction, that it exhibits Him to us in a different character; that is, that whilst the manna accurately foreshadowed Him as the One who “came down from heaven” to give us

life, and to be our life, the old corn of the land was a type of Him as One who, being in the world, died and was buried, and then rose again, the “plant of renown,” containing in Himself, as an ear of corn contains its numerous seeds, all those who, in the counsels of God, were quickened together with Him, to bring forth fruit to God to all eternity. As the manna, Jesus is the bread which came down from heaven, and is indeed the life of all who receive Him ; as the old corn of the land, He is the One who has been raised from the dead, and through union with whom all His people have eternal life. They both represent the same Jesus, but in different aspects.

In one respect they were both alike. The Israelites received both manna and old corn on the same condition—that of grace. They had toiled for neither : the manna was given them from heaven ; the corn had been sown and cultivated by other hands than theirs—they had no more right to it by inheritance, or as the reward of their own labour, than to the angels’ food. But on this point I need not again dwell. I would only proceed to show the scriptural warrant for the view now given of the typical meaning of the old corn of the land, and then we shall be finally in a position to discover the reason of the exchange of the one for the other by the Israelites on their entrance into Canaan.

It will be remembered that when certain Greeks, as recorded in the 12th of John, came to Philip, say-

ing, "Sir, we would see Jesus ;" and their desire was communicated to the Lord, He satisfied it by an answer that was full of the deepest teaching concerning His own person, suffering, and glory ; for beginning by saying to them, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified," He proceeded to explain in what that glory consisted, and how it was to be attained ; for He added, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," (xii. 24.) The glory of the Son of Man consisted in bearing "much fruit ;" the means whereby it was to be attained was similar to that which is observed in the world of nature, viz., death and resurrection. As the corn of wheat cannot "be quickened except it first die," and thus, through dying, becomes the parent of numerous other corns of wheat, bearing "much fruit ;" so was He to become the Author of eternal salvation, the "Father of many nations," the One who was truly to "blossom and fill the face of the world with fruit," only through the gate and grave of death. All who were to be partakers of His life, and thus to be the fruit of the travail of His soul, were to be united to Him in resurrection, as those who, in their Head and representative, had died, and were "married to Him that was raised from the dead."

It is, therefore, evident that when the Lord spake of the corn of wheat, He spake of Himself, as the

one who was to die and be quickened, and thus become the second Adam, in whom the multitudinous seed of the Church of the living God were to be born unto eternal life, for “unto Him shall be *glory* in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.”

Now the instructed believer clearly apprehends that He who is the life of His soul, and by constant communion with, or reception of, whom, by faith, that life is maintained, is not merely One who came down from heaven, but One who has died, and is risen again ; not only an incarnate Saviour, but a crucified and risen Saviour. It is one thing to see Jesus as the gift of God, as One who came into the world to save sinners, and a blessed thing, too, for it is eternal life thus to see Him, thus to receive Him ; but it is another and more blessed thing intelligently to apprehend the truth of union with a risen Jesus, as crucified with Him, buried with Him, quickened with Him, identified with Him in His resurrection-life. It was this glorious truth into which St Paul was earnestly endeavouring to lead the Ephesians, and the first three chapters of his epistle are devoted to the object of showing them that, as believers in Jesus, they were thus united to Him in the heavenly places. It was this which he prayed that they might, through “the enlightening of the eyes of their understanding,” be enabled to know ; not only that that knowledge might remain in their minds a barren intellectual

truth, but that the result of it might be, as he prays in his second prayer, (iii. 19,) "That Christ might dwell in their hearts," and that thus they might "be filled with all the fulness of God;" that is, that they might so feed on the "old corn of the land," so receive and have communion with this risen Lord, to whom they were united, that they might be "no more children," but grow up in the knowledge of the Son of God unto full stature and height.

And all this was with the object of enabling them to wage the tremendous conflict with wicked spirits in heavenly places which is described in the 6th chapter.

The meaning of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and its bearing upon the standing of the believer, as quickened and raised together with Him, has been so much dwelt upon in the previous chapters of this volume, that I do not call further attention to the subject in detail now. The point before us is rather that, at a certain stage in the experience of the believer, he comes to apprehend Christ as his life and sustenance in a different character to that in which he apprehended Him when first, as a perishing sinner, he laid hold of Him for pardon and salvation.

Not that there is any difference in Christ, nor that the advanced believer is more thoroughly united to Him than the young convert. The latter is as completely identified with the death and resur-

rection of the Lord Jesus, and is as fully seated in the heavenly places, as the former. The forgiveness is as entire, the life as eternal, the acceptance as complete, in the one case as in the other. The babe in Christ and the father in Christ are equally united to Him, and the title of the one to all the blessings flowing from that union is as indefeasible as the title of the other. The youngest child that had crossed over Jordan was as much in the land of Caanan as the veteran Joshua and Caleb. The difference lies not in the *possession* of "all spiritual blessings" in Christ, but in the *apprehension* of them. My child of a day old is as much my child, and as such, entitled to my love, protection, and care, as the one that has reached to maturer years; but by reason of youth it does not know all that it possesses, or to which it is entitled.

It is simply a question of degree of experience; and it is evident that there are numbers of believers, true children of God, who, whilst they rest peacefully in the blood of the Lamb that saved them from judgment, and feed daily on Jesus as the bread of life, have never even perhaps seen the deeper truths of union, identification, and communion with a risen and glorified Saviour, much less realised their power. The fact is, that the "old corn of the land" embodies an aspect of Jesus as the source of His people's strength, that "bread which strengtheneth man's heart," so deep, so rich, that, advanced as our experience may be

we can ever discover more to be drawn out and apprehended. Even Paul, after many years of blessed communion, was compelled to say, “Not as though I had already attained,” and “I count not myself to have apprehended.” The great desire of his soul was that he might “know Him, and the power of His resurrection.”

We are but children till we thus, at least in measure, know the Lord Jesus ; we cannot be said to have attained to the *rest* which the Lord our God giveth us, till we are able, with the judgment consciously behind us, to hold communion with Him, as those who are risen with Him. The Israelites were but in a transition state (so far as experience was concerned) until Jordan lay behind them, and with newly circumcised persons, and hearts freshly realising the value of the Lamb as their passover, they quietly feasted upon the rich provision so freely laid up for them in the plains of Jericho.

And this brings us to an understanding of the third point selected for consideration—*the lesson taught by the exchange of the manna for the old corn of the land.*

The Israelites had arrived at maturity : they had a tremendous task before them; “cities walled up to heaven,” “seven nations greater and mightier” than they, “giants, the sons of Anak,” were to be subdued and cast out; their real conflict was now to begin. They needed, therefore, no

longer children's food; to strengthen them for this long and great campaign, the "finest of the wheat" was necessary.

For, although miraculously given, although it was the "bread of heaven," the manna was still "light food." No doubt the Israelites, when they called it by that name, were wrong in loathing it, and in wishing to exchange it for the flesh-pots of Egypt; but, compared with the rich nutritious produce of Canaan, it was probably "light." Its cessation, therefore, and the substitution for it of other food, was doubtless to show that, in the new and better land, with higher privileges and greater responsibilities, there was a stronger and richer supply provided for them; for we cannot suppose that the provision for the wilderness, where they were "suffered to want," and were "humbled," could be better than that which was appointed as their portion when they came into the enjoyment of the goodly land, the land of promise, with its milk and honey, its olive-yards, and vine-yards, and *corn*-fields. The wanderings and trials of the desert were over; the manna, which, though it fed, was given for the express purpose of "humbling" them, (Deut. viii. 3,) was therefore to cease. God had now brought them into the land of fatness. He "made him to ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields." And it was therefore in

perfect harmony with all the blessing which was now so richly given them that the stronger food should be supplied to them.

We thus see clearly marked out two distinct stages in the life of the nation: the one wherein, as *children*, they were fed with manna; the other wherein, as *men*, they partook of the old corn of the land. For each period there was suitable food; and as they were not allowed the corn of Canaan in the wilderness, so it would have shown a want of appreciation of the blessings of the land if they had wished to continue to feed upon that which was but fitted for them in an earlier stage.

And we are as distinctly taught in the New Testament, that the food which is suitable for the new-born babe would not do for the full-grown man; but that in the rich supplies of God's Word provision for each is found—the “milk” for the one, the “strong meat” for the other. Both represent Christ. He is the alone food and sustenance of the soul that has been born again; but, as before pointed out, the two expressions describe Him as the One on whom, though in different aspects, the believer, either as child or man, feeds for the renewal of spiritual life.

Thus, when St Peter addresses those who had been recently “born again,” (1 Pet. i. 23,) he urges them “as *new-born babes*” to “desire the sincere (lit. unadulterated) *milk* of the Word,” that they might “grow thereby;” but when the

Hebrew Christians are addressed, who had evidently reached maturer age, they are blamed for needing “milk” instead of “strong meat;” for they are told, that “every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But that strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil,” (Heb. v. 12–14.) It was not in the “first principles of the oracles of God” that they ought to have needed instruction; “for the time,” (*i.e.*, considering their age,) they “ought to be teachers;” but they had become “dull of hearing,” and it was, therefore, with difficulty, the writer considered, that they would be able to understand and receive the “strong meat” connected with the high priesthood of Christ, which He was anxious to spread before them.

In a similar strain St Paul writes to the Corinthians: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Cor. iii. 1–3.) Their condition was to be blamed; their quarrellings and bickerings plainly showed that they were but children in Christian life and practice; they were

in a position answering to the wilderness condition of the Israelites, and needed light food ; they were “puffed up,” (v. 2,) and required humbling and treating as children instead of as men.

Now this we shall at once perceive was an unworthy position for both the Hebrew and the Corinthian believers to occupy. But is there nothing similar to it in these days ? Where are the “young men” who have “overcome the world ?” Where are the “fathers” in Christ ? What is the condition of the Churches of Christ now that eighteen hundred years have passed away since the advent of the Lord ? Does not the Corinthian Church, with its parties and sects and denominations, its abuse of holy ordinances, its worldly and ungodly living, its lack of knowledge, even of the resurrection, in a great measure represent it ? Does not, again, the slothful progress of the Hebrew Christians, if progress it could be called, their general unskilfulness in the Word, their backwardness to teach others what they had learnt, exhibit what must be acknowledged to be in the main the actual state of the mass of professing Christians ?

No doubt there are exceptions ; thank God there are some who delight in being truly able to say, “Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more,” who do “know the power of His resurrection,” who, by sweet communion with Him, are strengthened to fight His battles and overcome the wicked one,

and whose joy it is to declare to others the rich feast which they are thus enjoying, in order that they too may have fellowship with them. But how few and far between ! Is not the spirit of many a pastor burdened with the thought that so few to whom he ministers can appreciate the strong meat on which he feeds ; that he must again and again teach those who "for the time ought to be teachers, which be the first principles of the oracles of God ?" Perhaps there is a fault on both sides. Doubtless, in every sermon the simple gospel should be clearly preached, in order that no careless soul might, so far as the preacher was concerned, go away unawakened, no anxious soul depart unblessed. Would to God that this were more remembered by those who are "ambassadors for Christ !" But are there not some in every congregation who would value the old corn of the land, who thirst to have the Melchisedek priesthood and all its glories opened up to them, who would fain be led over the hills and valleys of the goodly land beyond Jordan, and who go away week by week only fed with milk, blessing God, it is true, for that sincere milk, which is ever fresh and sweet to their taste, but yet longing for stronger meat ?

And if there be not such, is it not the pastor's work to awaken in the sheep of Christ's flock an appetite for richer pasture. Will he not best promote the study of the Word, the exercising of the senses to discern both good and evil, by unfolding

by degrees the rich provision that God has made for His people in His inexhaustible Word? Has the tree of life in the midst of the garden but one manner of fruit? Nay, we know it has twelve. The Word ever furnishes fresh and varying views of Jesus, suited to the ages, the capacities, the conditions of the dwellers in the garden. Why should preachers content themselves and starve the flock, by only holding forth one manner of fruit, when God has provided twelve? Verily, there is a fault on both sides. God be thanked for the many blessed exceptions; but how many a church must be visited, till the seeker grows weary and sick at heart, before that exception is found!

Oh! for a richer, fuller, preaching of Jesus in all His glory, glorious as the bread of life which came down from heaven, (for we are in one sense still in the wilderness, and need the daily manna; and thanks be to God, it is laid up for us in the sanctuary, and though "hidden," is still to be enjoyed,)—glorious as the old corn of the land, the rich, and ever-fruitful supply of the needs of His people.

Then should we see the hosts of God advancing in renewed strength to the conflict with the powers of evil around; "strengthened with might by the Spirit in *the inner man*," by that Spirit who only renews and strengthens by exhibiting and communicating Jesus and His love to their souls, they would arise, and, conscious of new life and power,

would overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, in a way which has never been seen since, endued with that same strength, fed upon that same food, the handful of believers in days of old “ turned the world upside down ” and triumphed everywhere in Christ.

Be not then content, dear reader, with the milk, precious and indispensable as that is at the beginning of life. As desirous as a mother is that her little one at the due season should exchange the food which was fitted to nourish it as a babe, but which would not strengthen it and cause it to grow, or, after a certain period, fit it for the active duties of life, so desirous is our heavenly Father that His sons and daughters should be “ no more children ” but they should “ *grow* in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” As Abraham made a great feast the day that Isaac was weaned, so is there rejoicing when the soul learns what it is to feed on Jesus in all the rich variety of characters and offices which He bears, and whilst never forgetting Him, either as the passover in Egypt, the milk of the Word, or the manna of the wilderness, seeks to apprehend Him as “ *the fulness of God.* ”

And as such the written Word reveals Him who is the Living Word. It needs, it is true, patient study, diligent search, and a prayerful spirit there to discover Him, but in all such labour there is profit: “ Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest

up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God," (Prov. ii. 3-5.)

The Word may be compared to a field, from the surface of which one is content to reap his harvest, while another digs below its surface and brings up hidden treasure. There is a "deep that lieth under," that can never be exhausted. The fulness of God in Christ is infinite. There is "bread enough and to spare." He says, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;" "open thy mouth wide and I will fill it."

It must be at the same time remembered, that as it was only after the circumcision had taken place and the passover had been kept that the old corn of the land was enjoyed, so it is only with hearts deeply conscious of what they owe of life and liberty to the precious blood of Christ, and purged from all iniquity by spiritual circumcision, that we are fitted to apprehend and enjoy "the finest of the wheat," which is provided in Jesus, and ministered to the soul by the Holy Ghost. The believer who has in experience forgotten the blood of sprinkling, or who is not diligent in cleansing himself from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, will only be puffed up by the intellectual understanding of the deep things of God. "Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand

doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts," (Isa. xxviii. 9.) It is the obedient children whom the Father loves to instruct and to whom He will show His glory.

May that be our position and portion, for Christ's sake!

THE DRAWN SWORD; OR, JESUS OUR LEADER.

JOSHUA v. 13—vi. 2.

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him, with a sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord’s host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.”

THERE was yet one thing lacking to make the armies of Israel ready at all points to advance to the attack of Jericho, but that one thing was all-important. They wanted a leader. However numerous the host, however great its valour, a skilful general was indispensable to success. True, they had a leader in Joshua, who had commanded

them in the occasional conflicts in which they had been engaged in their wanderings. Under his guidance they had overcome Amalek, and it was probably he who had led them against “Og the king of Bashan, and Sihon king of the Amorites.” But on these occasions he was not their commander-in-chief. Moses still lived; and there can be little doubt that the plans for the battle were formed under the direction of that servant of God. In undertaking the siege of Jericho, Joshua was therefore placed in a novel and trying position. If Moses shrank from leading the people through the wilderness unless the distinct presence and guidance of God was continued, (see Exod. xxxiii. 12-16,) much more might Joshua, so recently deprived of the experience and counsel of that wise ruler, hesitate before he led the armies of Israel against the virgin fortress that barred their progress. It was probably, therefore, whilst surveying the city, and considering with anxiety the best method of attack, that he was favoured with the vision and the revelation which the verses at the head of the chapter describe. It was as he stood “by Jericho, and lifted up his eyes and looked,” that he beheld a man with a drawn sword in his hand. His appearance, as was naturally the case, at once aroused Joshua’s attention. It must have been clear that he was not an Israelite, for if he had been, his dress would have rendered no inquiry necessary, and it was improbable that an inhabitant

of Jericho would be alone in such close proximity to the armies of Israel. But whoever he might be, it was manifest that he was no neutral ; "a sword drawn in his hand" plainly revealed that he was prepared to take a decided and active part in the deadly struggle that was on the point of commencing. To set all doubt at rest, Joshua without delay interrogated him, "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" prepared, no doubt, either to welcome him as an ally or to draw the sword upon him as an adversary. Imagine then the surprise of Israel's leader when the reply fell upon his ear, "Nay! but as Captain of Jehovah's host am I now come." "It is not as a mere ally that I am here, it is not to enrol Myself under thy banner and to afford thee the assistance of an additional sword that I am come; it is to assume supreme command, to lead thee as well as thine army that My presence is manifested—thou art to fight under My banner, not I under thine."

"And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship." He at once in deep reverence acknowledged the presence of One greater than man, and in lowly prostration at His feet inquired, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" He perhaps imagined him to be an angel, for there must have been a reason for the command which immediately followed, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." Such reverence was never enjoined to be paid by

man to angels : the direction must have immediately reminded Joshua of the wondrous story, which he had doubtless often heard from the lips of his departed friend and master, of the day when similar words had been addressed to him out of the burning bush, and had been directly followed by the announcement, “ I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Yes, the conviction must at once have flashed upon his mind that he was in the presence of One “ much better than the angels,” of One who, though “ Prince of Peace,” had yet girded His sword upon His thigh, and had come forth for the salvation of His people. We are, however, left in no uncertainty as to the character and nature of Him who thus appeared to Joshua ; for the narrative is immediately continued in the words, “ And the LORD said unto Joshua.” It was indeed none other than Jehovah, who had come at the very moment when His presence and guidance were so sorely needed, to take command of the host, and to lead them forth to victory. He knew their want—He had come to supply it ; and then to the reverently listening Joshua He proceeded to issue his orders with regard to the manner in which siege was to be laid to the city.

These directions must be reserved for another chapter ; let us here proceed to study the prominent points in the incident just related : namely,

the *drawn sword* and the *Captain of the Lord's host*; and may it be at the same time remembered that the subject is one which demands our reverent attention. As it was with unshod feet that Joshua was directed to hearken to Him who then stood by him, as it was that Presence which made the place whereon he stood "holy ground," so let us bear in mind that we have to do with Him whose name is "*the Holy One of Israel*," and seek to have our hearts in that submissive and reverent frame which the realised presence of our great God and Saviour cannot fail to cause.

Let us, then, first consider the *drawn sword*. What did it mean? If the appearance of the Lord had only been intended to convey to Joshua the assurance of His presence, and that He was come to assume command of the host, the additional feature of the drawn sword in His hand would have been unnecessary. We must therefore conclude that something definite was to be meant by it, which would otherwise have been lacking. What was that lesson? I believe it conveyed a twofold lesson. First, that there must be *no hesitation* in the conflict; and secondly, *no quarter* to the enemy. A little consideration will show us that it was more than likely that the Israelites stood at that moment in special need of such instruction.

We can remember what dismay had been spread among the host when the returning spies described to them the strength of the fortresses of Canaan,

the power and size of the inhabitants of the land. “The people,” they said, “be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and, moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. . . . And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight,” (Num. xiii. 28, 32, 33.) The courage of the people instantly sank; “they lifted up their voice and cried; the people wept that night.” “Would God we had died in the land of Egypt!” they said, “or would God we had died in the wilderness!” “Hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” What a wretched exhibition of unbelief and cowardice! and this too was after the victory over Amalek, in which the power of God had been displayed, a victory commemorated by the erection of an altar, called “Jehovah-nissi, the Lord my banner;” it was when Moses was still in their midst, and the “men of war” had not yet died out from among them.

If such was the case then, how much more likely

was it to be so now, when Moses had been taken away, and the men of war consumed from among them. They stood under the battlements of the walled cities, the account of which had so terrified their fathers, and almost face to face with the Canaanites, of great power and stature? Was it not likely that the hearts of the children might fail them at this critical moment, like the hearts of their fathers, and that they might be ready to say once more, "It were better to return into Egypt?"

But a drawn sword implied that there was no option. When once the scabbard is flung aside, the battle is begun, war at least is declared, and to hesitate is to court defeat. The die was cast, they were in the enemy's country, their position must be maintained, their claim made good by force of arms—the sword was drawn.

And does not the soldier of Jesus Christ frequently experience the necessity of being reminded that he is by position and profession committed to a warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil; that there can be no neutrality, for the Master has said, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad;" that there must be no hesitation, for to falter is to fail? There is no Christian, perhaps, who has not at one time or another felt his spirit overwhelmed within him, as he has surveyed "all the power of the enemy" against whom he is called upon to fight. And this not only when, "from Egypt

lately come," in the earlier stages of his spiritual life he measures himself against the giants that oppose his progress. The tendency to hesitate, to flinch from a position of decided conflict, is as likely to beset the experienced believer, who has realised his position in the land of promise, and has come to the rest which God had promised him. Was it not the hero of the valley of Elah, he who had slain his "ten thousands," who "tarried still at Jerusalem at the time when kings go forth to battle?" And do we not remember what sin and sorrow followed that indulgence in luxury when there should have been the girding on of armour? Yes; it is needful to be reminded constantly that this is in one sense "not our rest;" that we are never so safe as when girded to the battle; that we are committed by our very calling and position to immediate and constant warfare with the enemies of God within us and without us.

The phases of conflict to which we are called may be very different. It was no longer against Amalek or Midian, but against "nations greater and mightier" than they that Israel had now to contend; and it was the very fact of their being in the land of Canaan that constituted them the opponents of a new class of enemies. And so it is that our apprehension and realisation of union with Christ in heavenly places at once brings us into conflict with temptations that we were not conscious of before, and makes us responsible for at

once advancing to subdue, in the name of the Lord, the fortresses of sin and Satan, of which the world is, alas! full.

It is, therefore, after expounding to the Ephesians the blessed truths on which we have dwelt in the preceding chapters, that the Apostle urges them to take unto them "the whole armour of God," the breastplate, the girdle, the shoes, the shield, the sword, and the helmet, that they may "be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, and having done all, to stand." For he says, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. vi. 12). Yes; though seated in the heavenlies, though in actual possession of all spiritual blessings, we have to wrestle; and if the armour be laid aside, or the sword sheathed, though but for a moment, we are for that moment off our guard, and liable to be overcome. "The drawn sword," then, fitly exhibits to us the necessity for a bold and decided attitude as soldiers of Christ; and there will be few readers of these pages, who know anything of Christian experience, who will not confess that the falls they have had, and the defeats they have sustained, have generally, in some measure at least, arisen from their having forgotten that they were in a country peopled by enemies, filled with danger, and where their only safety lay in

assuming and maintaining an attitude of uncompromising hostility to sin.

But it also taught the Israelites that “*no quarter*” was to be given, and was thus in precise accordance with the commands previously issued : “Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them, thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them ;” “Thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven ;” “Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth, but thou shalt utterly destroy them ;” “Thine eye shall have no pity upon them.” And the reason for this extermination was added—“Lest thou be snared by following them.”

We know from their subsequent history how the neglect to carry out these commands involved Israel in constant trouble, and at last led even to their expulsion from the good land. It was by not driving out the inhabitants that they became gradually mixed up with them, learnt their ways, served their gods, and incurred their punishments. If they had only been faithful, how different would their course and history have been ! But their failures are written for our admonition, and the lesson that they did not learn from that drawn sword we may, by God’s help, apprehend and carry out.

No quarter to sin. Yes, such is the command ; we are inclined to qualify it, to make excuses for not obeying it to the letter, to urge that it is impossible to carry it out completely, that our constitutions, our natural temperaments, our cir-

cumstances, prevent a thorough compliance—some sins may be resisted and overcome, but there are others to which we are apt to think we may fairly show some indulgence. Like Saul, when directed utterly to destroy the Amalekites, we excuse ourselves for showing mercy to some of our sins, and yet say, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” It was untrue as long as there was a single Amalekite alive; it is untrue as long as any sin, great or small, is allowed to survive and work in us. “Our old man was crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be *destroyed*,” not that it might be allowed to live sometimes, or under some circumstances.

Let me ask my Christian reader, for to such only do these truths apply, what has been the practice of your life? Have you resolutely set your face against, and, so to speak, drawn your sword upon, every evil habit, every sinful way of which you have been conscious? Do I not speak for others as well as for myself when I say that we have tolerated the existence of habits, the continuance in sins, which our consciences have distinctly disapproved? And if so, what has been the consequence? Why, just what happened with the Israelites, that those ways and practices which we permitted to continue have grown in strength, and have often asserted a dominion and exerted an influence over us which has brought darkness and sorrow upon our lives.

God well knew what He meant when He directed the complete extermination of the inhabitants of the land ; and His reason is as clear when He directs His people to maintain a constant and uncompromising hostility to all manner of sin. It would be too long a task to attempt to particularise here the numberless ways in which the people of God permit themselves to continue in the indulgence of things which they yet know are contrary to the will of God and to the mind of the Spirit, or the various excuses which they frame for themselves. Their name is Legion. Oh ! how well it would have been for us, if, like David, we could say, “ I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them ; neither did I turn again till they were consumed. I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise : they are fallen under my feet,” (Ps. xviii. 37, 38.) With such warriors God is well pleased, while, on the contrary, His displeasure is on such as carry on a half-hearted warfare with sin : “ Cursed be he,” He says, “ that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood,” (Jer. xlvi. 10.)

As the drawn sword, then, implied no quarter to the enemies of God, so it teaches us that our warfare against every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, whether within or without us, must be constant and uncompromising, if we are to be “ good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” It is true, as I hope to be able hereafter to show,

that the inhabitants of Canaan and their cities represent rather the power of the enemy in the world than that power in the hearts of the people of God ; and it is on the warfare with such power that I intend principally to dwell, if permitted to do so ; but the inward aspect of the same truth is so important that I feel that the few preceding words on the subject will not be out of place.

We may now proceed to consider the second point, the *Captain of the Lord's host*. First, the person who assumed that position ; and secondly, the position itself.

The person who assumed the position. We have seen that it was no man, no angel, but that it was Jehovah Himself who had thus drawn near and manifested Himself to Joshua. How gracious this was ! Did it not convey to His servant the fact that He took the very deepest interest in the struggle that was about to be commenced ? that although He was King of kings and Lord of lords, in whose sight "the nations are as the small dust of the balance" and "less than nothing," He yet felt so concerned in the people whom He had redeemed, that, notwithstanding their provocations and rebellions, He undertook Himself the guidance of their army ?

How small, how apparently and utterly insignificant, was the war in the plains of Jericho ! How infinitesimal a portion of the universe is this world ! how little the land of Canaan ! What a handful of pygmies were the armies on either side !

Yet “the Lord God omnipotent,” “the great and only Potentate,” espoused the cause of Israel, and came armed to the battle to lead them on to victory.

How precisely suited to the need of His people was this manifestation of Jehovah ! It was exactly what they wanted. Just when they had arrived in the enemy’s country, and were about to endeavour to cope with adversaries whose appearance had, forty years before, so terrified their fathers ; just as their hearts must have trembled as they thought upon the tremendous struggle before them, and the disastrous consequences that failure and defeat would bring upon them, and upon their wives and children, (for with Jordan behind them, their retreat was cut off;) just then, He who ruleth in the armies of heaven, the Lord God of hosts, the Lord mighty in battle, Himself drew near to be their Captain.

Oh, what comfort there is for the “soldiers of Christ” in this fact ! They often know, as one of the most eminent of them declared, what “weakness, fear, and much trembling” means. They know what it is to say, “within were fightings, without were fears.” And is not this specially the case with the young Christian as he surveys the power of the enemy, and considers his inexperience, his sinfulness, his helplessness ? How blessed, then, is it for such an one to know that One is come to help and strengthen him who is “mighty to save,” and before whose face all

enemies must be subdued! It was when David could say, "Jehovah is the strength of my life," that he could add, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident," (Ps. xxvii. 3.)

If it be true, as has been stated, that Napoleon's soldiers felt that his presence was as good as a division of forty thousand men, how much more true must it be that the presence of the living God inspires comfort and courage into the hearts of His people! Yes; when He has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

This has been the secret of the confidence, and consequently of the success, of the mighty men of God in all ages,—whether it be Gideon against Midian, David against Goliath, Paul against Paganism, or Luther against corrupt Christendom. The source of strength and victory has been the same—the presence of the Lord.

Take courage, then, doubting, trembling believer. Your enemies may be numerous and mighty, but they are "as nothing" to the living God; *your* power may have vanished, and there may remain no more strength in *you*: but He who came, unsolicited even, to encourage Joshua and the Israelites by His presence before Jericho, draws near to you, and says, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I

will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness. They that strive with thee shall perish ; they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought," (Isa. xli. 10-12.)

But let us notice the *position* that the Lord assumed on this occasion. Do we not learn something from the manner of His reply to Joshua? Not knowing at first who it was, Joshua had regarded Him as a warrior who was about to afford, to one side or to the other, the assistance of His sword as a common soldier, whose presence would make but a difference of *one* to either side. In answer, then, to his inquiry, "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" He said, "Nay, but as *Captain* of the Lord's host am I now come." It is not merely to help, but to govern ; not to lend thee some assistance, but to supersede thee in the command ; to assume the position of general-in-chief, and with that position to bear all its responsibilities.

This was altogether a different thing. It would have been a great thing to have had an angelic being on the side of Israel. What confidence it would have given if the Archangel Michael, or Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, had suddenly appeared to guide, or even to assist their army ! Victory would have been certain if even one of those "angels which excel in strength" had manifestly espoused the cause of Israel. We remember how, on a subsequent occasion, "the

angel of the Lord," in one night, "smote one hundred and eighty-five thousand." But here was the Lord of the angelic hosts, who "maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire"—the creator of angels and their sovereign Lord. Surely Israel might now face the foe with unwavering confidence, and sing of victory even before the battle was gained. And so may the Christian. It is to no conflict of uncertain issue that he advances; the result of the battle is not doubtful. The struggle may be severe, the warfare long; he may sometimes, like the pilgrim, be beaten to the ground, and well-nigh lose his sword; but "though cast down" he is "not destroyed." The Captain of salvation is on his side, and in the midst of sharpest conflict he can say, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Like David of old, he can advance even against giants, against opposition from the world, the flesh, and hell, for which he is no match, with the certain assurance that the result shall be triumph, for the mighty God—the Lord of hosts is on his side.

O believer! lay hold of this blessed truth—trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved—saved from the snares, the darts, the assaults that await you; take all the comfort you possibly can draw from the fact that He who is invincible, He who never can be defeated, is your strength and your shield.

But remember, He is not merely on your side;

He is your *Captain*. You are not only devoid of strength, and need Him for that, but you have no *wisdom* for the management of this terrible conflict, in which all the malice and subtlety of hell are against you. You are no match for that cunning which deceived unfallen man in Eden, for him who, we read, “deceiveth the *whole world*.” You are sure to make mistakes which will place you at his mercy. How blessed, then, to have an all-wise, as well as an almighty, Leader! One whose strategy is matchless, and who never fails to lead those who trust in Him to victory.

But if it is as *Captain* that He comes to our aid, it is in that character that we must honour Him. Our plans and schemes must be abandoned if they are not in harmony with His. Nay, more; we should never form them till we know His purposes. A soldier who would venture to plan an individual line of attack, instead of waiting for, and yielding implicit obedience to, the word of command, would be unworthy of the name of a soldier; nay, the highest general in the army, if he attempted to follow his own scheme instead of that of the commander-in-chief, would be guilty of the grossest folly and insubordination. Nothing but ignominious defeat could attend any army that was not completely under the command of *one*, and one only.

We see, therefore, that the moment the Lord assumed the command of Israel’s hosts, it was His

orders that they were bound to follow. The plans of Joshua, whatever they were, had accordingly to be laid aside. They might have been carefully meditated and skilfully arranged, but he was no longer in command ; and, in common with the meanest soldier of the army, he had to receive his orders from Him who had superseded him. He, moreover, probably found that the directions of the new Commander, as recorded in the following verses, were by no means those which he would have issued. The priests marching round the hostile city, the blasts with rams' horns, the seven days' repetition of the same proceedings, the shout of the army, these were certainly to Joshua a new and strange way of attempting to take a city "walled up to heaven." But it was not for him to question ; he had only to obey, and we well know that that obedience was rewarded by complete success.

And such is the path of the soldier of Christ still. We are called "unto *obedience*." Our wisdom, as well as our strength, must be laid aside ; our duty is to follow, and therein is success and victory.

For who is it that commands the army of the living God ? Is it not Jesus—"the wisdom of God and the power of God?" Yes ; He it is who is the "*Captain of our salvation*." It is of Him that it is written, "I have given Him for a Leader

and *Commander* to the people," (Isa. lv. 4.) It is of Him that we sing—

“One army of the living God,
To His command we bow.”

Is it as true in our experience? or do we not often find that, in endeavouring to fight the good fight, we as frequently lean to our own understanding as rely on our own strength, forgetting that it is as much our duty to submit to His directions for the warfare as to trust in Him as our power to maintain it?

Oh! how many of our mistakes may be traced to this, that we have not come to Him for direction, that we have not placed ourselves at His disposal, but have thought that though we must depend on His aid for success, we must yet use our own wisdom to plan our warfare and our work! And what have we then done? Why, like Peter, who drew his sword without being told to do so, we have done work which the Lord has had to undo, and taken steps that we have had painfully to retrace. Not that “common sense” is to be disregarded, and the use of the understanding that God has given us is to be neglected, but that sense and that understanding is to be subordinated to the Word of God, and used in complete subjection to Him who graciously condescends to direct it. He has given us the spirit of power, and of love, and of *a sound mind*,” but the soundness of mind is maintained

only in proportion as the heart is brought into contact with the Word of God. "Let my *heart* be *sound* in thy statutes," rightly prayed David, for he knew what the result would be, as he added, "that I be not *ashamed*."

Our "Captain," our "Leader and Commander," then, is Jesus. As such, no less than as Saviour, does He still say, "I am come." Our business is, as "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," to look for the "general orders" which He issues, to seek by prayer to understand them, and by faith to obey them; we need then have no doubt of the issue.

But, lastly, let us gather for our instruction and profit this further lesson; the *responsibility* of the battle is upon our Captain. True that each soldier is responsible for the performance of his individual duty, and that "every man shall give account of *himself* to God," but the responsibility of success is with Him whose commands he obeys.

The moment the "Captain of the Lord's host" superseded Joshua, the responsibility of the campaign was transferred from the latter to the former; and therefore, whilst Joshua would strain every nerve to carry out to the letter every direction he received, he would at the same time feel that he was relieved from all the weight of care and anxiety that must till that moment have rested upon him. He could now be "without carefulness," and could advance as the earthly leader of the armies of

Israel with the quietness and peace of one who knew that the plan of attack was devised by infinite wisdom, and that the omnipotent Jehovah was there to execute the scheme.

And it is the knowledge of this that gives the believer great peace, though in the midst of earnest and aggressive Christian work in the world, or in the constant conflict with the flesh and the devil which is waged in his own heart; as long as he casts this care, in common with his other cares, upon Him who is the great burden-bearer of His people, he has quietness of heart. So he is relieved of responsibility; having "committed his way unto the Lord," he "trusts in Him," knowing that "He shall bring it to pass," and thus he is kept in "perfect peace," for "his mind is stayed on Him."

How blessed it is, then, to know that we have in Jesus not only a Saviour from the penalty of our guilt, a Deliverer from the wrath to come—not only One who condescends to help us in the warfare to which we are called, but One who undertakes the whole responsibility of the conflict, upon whose shoulders is the government, and who is pledged to lead His people to victory as "Captain of their salvation," to bring His "many sons to glory!" Let us receive Him in the gracious character in which He is pleased to reveal Himself to us, accept Him as Leader and Commander as well as Redeemer, yield to His sway without distrust or hesitation, and we shall joyfully prove that, though the fight

of faith be severe and long, we shall be able constantly to say, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Joshua's attitude and Joshua's words are full of deep instruction for us, on which, however, it is hardly necessary to dwell at length. The attitude of *worship* and the expression of ready *obedience* are the great requisites for those who are the redeemed of the Lord and the servants of the Most High God. "What saith my Lord unto His servant?"—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"—"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." These words, whether uttered by Joshua, Paul, or Mary, describe the desire and the duty of the soldier of Christ. May it be our blessed privilege to realise their wondrous depth of meaning, and then we shall indeed prove that it is as true now as it was then, that guidance is given, miracles are wrought, and victory bestowed, and we shall be able to say with joy, THANKS BE UNTO GOD, WHO ALWAYS CAUSETH US TO TRIUMPH IN CHRIST!



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